

**Sotheby's**  
FOUNDED 1744

Monday 1st June  
at 10.30 am at Bloomfield Place, off New Bond Street  
**VALUABLE PRINTED BOOKS RELATING TO NATURAL HISTORY**  
Including the working library on Arachnida collected by Ernest Browning Esq., M.B.E., a fine collection of books mostly in German on the Management of Horses, a copy of Sir James Edward Smith's *The Botany of New Holland*, 1793 bound with 13 original drawings of Australian fauna and flora by a First Flora Fleet artist and numerous other fine colour plate books.  
*Illustrated Catalogue E3 Catalogue E2.50*

Tuesday 9th June  
at 9.30 am at Bloomfield Place, off New Bond Street  
**PRINTED BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS ON BEHALF OF FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY**  
fine bindings including a 'Cottonian' binding, a variety of modern first editions and Press Books, a rare book by H. C. Andersen, a French Bible leaf on vellum, c. 1320, an English road map of 1715, literary manuscripts and autograph letters of Dickens, Ruskin and others.  
*Illustrated Catalogue E1.50*

Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co., 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA Telephone: (01) 493 8080

**IF IT'S OUT-OF-PRINT**  
Our multi-volume warehouse has 100,000 titles in history, economics, politics and world affairs. Phone 01-478 7284 or write (see page 516).  
Barnes High Street, SW13  
We buy books, too  
Since 1948 a world-wide service  
**TRY HAMMERSMITH BOOKS**

**T.S. ELLIOT-CATTS** Old possum's book & stationery case. (1st edition) with dust jacket. Perfect. Offered 01-583 8104/5.

**TARA BOOKS LTD.** Specialist antiquarian and c/o catalogues issued. Details from 17 Church Lane, Lymington, Hants. L174

**MIDDLE EAST** booklets now available. Books on and printed in the M.E. Please send s.s.d. to Museum Bookshop, 34 Great Street, London WC1B 3PP (01-583 4086).

**BOOKS FROM AMERICA** any U.S. book or tract. Send list. Overseas Books, 14 West 1st Street, New York 10014 U.S.A.

**CHINA** Japan, Central Asia. Book lists and catalogues available. Long Shing Tiao Ltd., 25 Guilford Rd., E.C.4. Tel. 01-753 5447.

**OUT OF PRINT BOOK SERVICE.** 17 Fulwider Grove, Cardiff, S.S. for details. L174

**SOCIAL HISTORY** Catalogues issued. A.C. Hall, 30 Guinea Road, Twickenham, Middlesex. L114

**FOR BIBLIOGRAPHY** of studies on oral literature, please send items or citations to John Foley, Scotland Dept. 1, of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211 USA.

**FIRST CATALOGUE** out now containing 1980 & 1981 Century Illustrated Booklets, Children's and Adult Fiction, Geography, Canterbury Tales, 10 St. Peter's Street, Canterbury, Kent. L114

**JUST OPENED** Charlotte Robinson's bookshop & book stall, 15 St. Paul's Church, London W1. Books bought & searched for, specialists in Modern 18th Illustrated & Children's books Open Monday - 11.15 to 11am - 6pm.

**GENERAL VACANCIES**

**The British Petroleum Company Limited**

BP is Britain's largest and one of the world's most successful companies. International expansion and diversification both in energy-related and other activities has led to the creation of a new corporate structure.

New companies have been formed to pursue our international interests in Exploration, Oil (refining and marketing), Chemicals, Minerals, Coal, Gas, Nutrition, Detergents and other new ventures.

**Records Analyst**  
**c£7,600 London**

to be one of a team of three responsible for developing and implementing new records control procedures in the Group Records Authority of our Company Secretary's Department.

Duties will involve analysing records, assessing their needs for retention and improving local access to records within a group of departments, including some outside London; conducting and supervising document surveys; interviewing departmental staff regarding procedures, and involvement in the review, development and effective implementation of manual and automated records data systems. The work is challenging, varied and in the forefront of records management practice.

Applicants, with a degree, should hold a diploma in Archive Administration and preferably have some experience of records management activities. Students now taking a diploma course may be considered if they have appropriate pre-qualification experience.

Generous benefits include non-contributory pension scheme, excellent staff restaurant and sports and social facilities.

Please write giving details of age, qualifications and experience, quoting reference LS 983, to: Sue Bartholomew, The British Petroleum Company Limited, Britannic House, Moor Lane, London EC2Y 9BU.

**BP Britain at its best.**

All advertisements are subject to the conditions of acceptance of Times Newspapers Ltd. copies of which are available on request.

**PHYSICS GRAD** in a leading university. Postgraduate research in the field of quantum mechanics. Contact: Dr. J. Smith, Physics Department, University of Cambridge, CB2 3EG.

**ADVERTISE ALL YOUR LIBRARIAN VACANCIES FOR 1981 IN THE T.L.S.**  
Phone 01-537 1334

**FOR SALE & WANTED**  
ALMOST ANY SCIENTIFIC and technical book, in any language, for sale or purchase. Contact: Dr. J. Smith, Physics Department, University of Cambridge, CB2 3EG.

**23rd Antiquarian Book Fair**  
**Europa Hotel**  
**Grosvenor Square**  
**London W1**  
**9 10 11 June 1981**  
**11 am to 8 pm daily**

Admission by illustrated catalogue E1 (in aid of the Friends of the National Library). The catalogue is available now from the Secretary of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association, 144 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1. Loan Exhibition: Treasures from the National Libraries. His Grace The Duke of Devonshire PC will open the Fair on Tuesday, June 9th at 11 am.

**LITERARY**

**Ilkley Literature Festival '81**  
Ten days packed with books and book people including: John Ashbery (USA), Fred Akerstrom (Sweden), Isla Blair, George Baker, Brian Cleeve, Geoffrey Hill, Ludovic Kennedy, Fran Leharman, Magnus Magnusson, Dr. Colin McCabe, Alan Plater, Peter Redgrove, Janet Suzman, Robert Williamson and Gabriel Woolf, David Gascoigne, Gavin Ewart, Melvyn Bragg, Colin Welland, Penelope Shuttle. Exhibitions: Book Fairs (new and antiquarian), Puppets. Residential Summer Schools. Write for full programme to: The Festival Office, Ilkley, W. Yorks. LS29 8DG.

**HOME EXCHANGE**  
FLORENCE Letture and visit to lovely central first class villa. No exchange for similar is not possible. Contact: 01-583 8104/5.

**BUSINESS SERVICES**  
FROM JULY 1981 to 30th September 1981, 100% off the cost of a new or second-hand typewriter. Contact: 01-583 8104/5.

**MANUSCRIPTS** typed, edited, corrected and indexed by word processing. Contact: 01-583 8104/5.

**TYPING SERVICE** Fast, efficient, reliable. Contact: 01-583 8104/5.

**ARCHIVISTS**

**DURHAM CATHEDRAL LIBRARY**  
The Dean and Chapter of Durham wish to appoint a Cataloguer for pre-1801 printed books. The appointment is for 15 months. Salary will be on the National University Scale 1B (£5,070-£9,925). For further details apply to: The Administrator, Chapter Office, The Cathedral, Durham DH1 3EH. Closing date for applications 15th June, 1981. T15101

**EXHIBITIONS**

**JOHN HANSARD GALLERY THE UNIVERSITY SOUTHAMPTON THE PANORAMIC IMAGE**  
Panoramic works from The Renaissance to The present day  
1st May - 27th June, 1981, Mon - Sat, 11am - 8pm  
Tel Southampton (0703) 559122 Ext. 2158

**FELLOWSHIPS**

**DUNDEE UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE WRITING**  
Applications from writers in any genre are invited for a Fellowship in Creative Writing available in the summer of 1981 and carrying a stipend of £1,000 per annum. Further particulars of the Fellowship and application form available from: Dr. J. Smith, Dundee University, Dundee DD1 1TA.

**PERSONAL**

**IMMEDIATE ADVANCES** without leave on request. **REGIONAL TRUST LTD.** 31 Dyer St, Newcastle. Phone: 01-251 5834.

**RESEARCH** Assistant, translation, editing, proofreading, copy typing, etc. Contact: 01-583 8104/5.

**FOR SALE & WANTED**  
ALMOST ANY SCIENTIFIC and technical book, in any language, for sale or purchase. Contact: Dr. J. Smith, Physics Department, University of Cambridge, CB2 3EG.

**TLS** UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN LIBRARY

**THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT**

FRIDAY • 5 JUNE 1981 • No 4,079 • 50p

**CRIME AND DETECTION**

Hammett • Chandler • Eric Ambler  
Ruth Rendell • John Dickson Carr  
Julian Symons • George V. Higgins

**Philip Larkin on James Bond**

Michael Gilbert • Dorothy L. Sayers  
T. J. Binyon • Dr Petiot  
Kingsley Amis • Modesty Blaise

**An interview with P. D. James**

La vie d'Agatha Christie;  
Russell Davies's viewpoint

**Neglected crime classics - a symposium**

**From bibliography to L'histoire du livre**

**John Ashbery; E. D. Morel**

**Commentary: Anna Karenina, Britannicus, Serjeant Musgrave**

**'A Staffordshire Murderer' by James Fenton;**  
**'Dead Letter' by Craig Raine**

Readers unable to identify any of the eminent crime writers portrayed in the left and above will find all eight identified on page 636.



# MARGARET STACEY and MARION PRICE Women, Power, and Politics

Tavistock Women's Studies

"How can it possibly be that when women have only had the vote for fifty years that so many of them have become involved in politics? After attention to the evidence this is the surprising question that the authors felt compelled to ask. They examine this question cross-culturally, historically, and in the context of contemporary social and political arrangements.

224 pages  
Hardback 0 422 76140 0 £8.95  
Paperback 0 422 76150 8 £3.95

BARBARA ROGERS

## The Domestication of Women Discrimination in developing societies

In this study, Barbara Rogers sets out to examine how development planners deal with issues relating to women. She suggests that the failure of development planners to see incentives at the women who are in reality doing most of the work is an important factor in the disappointing record of so many development programmes and projects.

200 pages  
Paperback 0 422 77630 0 £3.95

SHEILA M SHINMAN

## A Chance for Every Child?

Access and response to pre-school provision

Foreword by A H Halsey

The initial focus of *A Chance for Every Child?* is on failure to take up pre-school provision. Examining evidence from British, North American, and European research, the author suggests that the assumptions inherent in present policies need to be challenged. New approaches are called for in which emphasis should be directed towards the needs and attitudes of the mother.

240 pages  
Hardback 0 422 77420 0 £8.95

ANN CARTWRIGHT and ROBERT ANDERSON

## General Practice Revisited

A second study of patients and their doctors

Ann Cartwright's earlier book *Patients and their Doctors* was a vast study, carried out in 1964, of general practice and the attitudes of patients and general practitioners to it. This new book compares the views and experiences described in the earlier study with those revealed by a second survey in 1977.

256 pages  
Hardback 0 422 77380 3 £11.50

DAVID LOCKER

## Symptoms and Illness

The cognitive organization of disorder

The aim of this book is to discuss common understandings of health and illness and the way these may be used to structure our experience of the world. Contemporary sociological theory is used to distinguish between 'disease' and 'illness' and to demonstrate that there is no necessary relationship between events in the biological realm and the social meanings imputed to them.

208 pages  
Hardback 0 422 77480 X £12.00

PETER R DAY

## Social Work and Social Control

There is a dearth of information as to how social workers view their dual, caring and controlling, function, and indeed as to the perceptions of social work agencies' constituency - the clients - in this context.

Peter Day discusses the theoretical and philosophical issues that affect social work, including varying concepts of social order and authority and the influences of determinist theories.

256 pages  
Hardback 0 422 77620 7 £9.50  
Paperback 0 422 77630 4 £4.50

Now available in paperback

## FRANK PARKIN Marxism and Class Theory

A bourgeois critique

216 pages  
Hardback 0 422 76790 5 £7.95  
Paperback 0 422 77810 5 £4.95

All prices net in the UK only



# THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

JUNE 5 1981

## contents

JULIAN SYMONS	Richard Layman: Shadow Man - The Life of Dashiell Hammett	60
GAVIN EWART	Jerry Spier: Raymond Chandler	61
JANET MORGAN	The Victorian Marital Murders (poem)	62
	Françoise Rivière: Agatha Christie, "Duchesse de la Mort"	63
ZARA STEINER	Catherine Ann Cline: E. D. Morel - 1873-1924	64
JAMES FENTON	A Staffordshire Murderer (poem)	65
M. E. YAPP	Stephen Frederic Dale: Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier	66
PETER MARSHALL	Alice Hanson Jones: Wealth of a Nation to Be - The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution	67
	David Grayson Allen: In English Ways	68
JOHN KEEGAN	David Wilkinson: Deadly Quarrels	69
PAUL LEGG	John Sabini: Armies in the Sand	70
C. J. RAWSON	Irvin Stock: Fiction as Wisdom From Goethe to Bellow	71
PHILIP LARKIN	John Gardner: Licence Renewed	72
MICHAEL GILBERT	Eric Ambler: The Care of Time	73
FRANCIS WYNDHAM	Ruth Rendell: Put on by Cunning	74
KINGSLEY AMIS	John Dickson Carr: The Door to Doom	75
JULIAN BARNES	Thomas Maeder: The Unspeakable Crimes of Dr Petiot	76
GILLIAN FREEMAN	Jessica Mann: Deadlier than the Male	77
VICTORIA GLENDINNING	James Brabazon: Dorothy L. Sayers - The Life of a Courageous Woman	78
CRAIG RAINE	The Dead Letter (poem)	79
ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN	Peter O'Donnell: Modesty Blaise - The Xanadu Tollsman	80
CRAIG BROWN	John Simpson: Moscow Requiem	81
	Sandy Galt: Chasing the Dragon	82
RUSSELL DAVIES	Viewpoint	83
ZACHARY LEADER	Neglected Crime Fiction: A Symposium	84
ERIC KORN	Eric Green: Don't Speak Now	85
	Remains	86
CHRISTOPHER WINTLE	Commentary	87
PAUL DRIVER	Anna Karenina (London Coliseum)	88
	Granger's Complete British Folk-song Settings and Finlay's Piano Concerto No 6 (British Music Information Centre, Stratford Place)	89
	Death Watch (Paris Pullman)	90
	Britannicus (Lyric Studio, Hammer Smith)	91
	Theatre Workshop Cabaret (Theatre Royal, Stratford East)	92
	Show Trial (Tricycle Theatre)	93
	Sergeant Musgrave's Dance (Cottesloe Theatre)	94
	On Becoming a Bookseller	95
	Fifty years on . . .	96
	To the Editor	97
	Among this week's contributors	98
T. J. BINYON	John M. Reilly: Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers	99
	Arthur Conan Doyle: The Complete Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (edited by Julian Symons)	100
MICHAEL SCAMMELL	Marlin Cruz Smith: Gorky Park	101
PETER LEWIS	George V. Higgins: The Rat on Fire	102
LINDSAY DUGUID	Colin Dexter: The Death of Jericho	103
PATRICIA CRAIG	An interview with P. D. James	104
J. I. M. STEWART	H. R. F. Keating: Go West, Inspector Ghote	105
JESSICA MANN	Antonia Fraser: A Splash of Red	106
	Sara Woods: Cry Guilty	107
ROBIN SEAGER	M. L. Clarke: The Noblest Roman	108
C. H. SISON	W. S. Merwin (Translator): The Satires of Persius	109
T. P. WISEMAN	Peter Greenhalgh: Pompey - The Republican Prince	110
HELEN MCNEIL	John Ashberry: As We Know	111
	David Lehman (Editor): Beyond Amusement - New Essays on John Ashberry	112
JULIE WHITBY	Jonathan Holden: The Rhetoric of the Contemporary Lyric	113
	Russian Collage (poem)	114
DOUGLAS DUNN	Louise Simpson: Cavaliers at the Funeral	115
J. S. BRATTON	John Kipton: Post-War British Theatre criticism	116
LACHLAN MACKINNON	James L. Patten: Robert Frost: Handbook	117
SOPHIA DE MELLO BREYNER	In the Poem (poem)	118
DAVID PIPER	Robert Adams: The Lost Museum	119
ANDREW LINCOLN	David Y. Erskine and others (Editors): William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's "Night Thoughts"	120
G. THOMAS TANSSELL	The History of Books as a Field of Study (article)	121
PETER REDDFOVE	Capsules (poem)	122
D. J. MCKITTERICK	Hans Schmolzer (Editor and Translator): Giovanni Mardarelli's The Official Bottom	123
LOTTE HELLINGA	B. Amelung: Der Frühdruck in deutschen Süddeutschen 1873-1890	124
ANTHONY HOBSON	Eine Ausstellung der Württembergische Landesbibliothek	125
	F. A. Schmidt-Klausmüller: Corpus der gotischen Leichenschriften aus dem deutschen Sprachgebiet	126
B. C. BLOOMFIELD	Grainha Shaw: Printing in Calcutta to 1800	127
KYRIE FITZLYON	Francis Carr: Ivan The Terrible	128
D. G. KIRBY	Anthony F. Upton: The Finnish Revolution 1917-1918	129

## BIOGRAPHY

# The tough guy at the typewriter

By Julian Symons

RICHARD LAYMAN:

Shadow Man: The Life of Dashiell Hammett  
267pp. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.  
\$4.95.

JERRY SPIER:

Raymond Chandler  
166pp. Frederick Ungar.  
0 844 2826 3

Lives of crime writers mostly remind us that more lively hours may be spent in reading their books, but there are exceptions, the most conspicuous of them being Dashiell Hammett. According to the legend, Hammett turned his own life into fiction. His years as a Pinkerton detective were the basis of the Continental Op stories, and Hammett himself was the origin first of Sam Spade, and later of the hard-drinking Nick Charles in *The Thin Man*. Lillian Hellman helped to create this legend. Hammett in her romantic accounts of their intermittent life together over thirty years, like the story of their first meeting in a Hollywood restaurant, when he was recovering from a long drinking session. "The five-day drunk had left the wonderful face looking rumpled, and the very tall thin figure was tired and sagged. We . . . went and sat in his car and talked to each other and over each other until it was daylight." That is Nick Charles Hammett, who may also be glimpsed in the film *Julia*. Sam Spade Hammett can be found in Joe Gore's *Hammett*, which offers a sometimes ingenious fictional reconstruction of Hammett's life in San Francisco.

This legendary Hammett existed, although he was not the whole man. As his friend the screen writer Nunnally Johnson wrote to me: "From the day I met Hammett, in the late Twenties, his behaviour could be accounted for only by an assumption that he had no expectation of being alive much beyond Thursday . . . Even allowing for the exuberance or youthful approach of success, not to mention the daftness of the Twenties, no one could have spent himself and his money with such recklessness who expected to be alive much longer." But this was a miscalculation by Hammett, akin to Dylan Thomas's belief in his early twenties that he would not live more than a few months. To quote Johnson again: "Lusty friends sickened and died, and Hammett, for whom we all drew a deep sigh every other day, survived. When the end approached, it was thirty years later than he had expected it, and Death owed him a genuine apology when eventually it made its tardy appearance." Yet Johnson's account is romantically exaggerated, as Richard Layman's *Shadow Man: The Life of Dashiell Hammett* makes plain. The book of this first biography of Hammett (William F. Nolan's *Dashiell Hammett: A Casebook*, published in 1968, was no more in biographical terms than an informative sketch) is a factual quality. It has been written without help or hindrance from Lillian Hellman, and is a disproof of her statement that nothing of value could be written about Hammett without her assistance. Mr Layman does not debunk, but tends to deflate. The thin man's face was wonderful, but he had bad teeth.

The story of Hammett's life is dramatic and tragic enough. He was born in Maryland in 1894, the son of a heavy, handsome, hard-drinking man who never had much success in life. Richard Hammett was an aspiring politician, and then a streetcar conductor, clerk, and apparently a door-to-door salesman of seafood. He was the eldest of three children, and spent at fourteen to help with the business, which was soon given up. Father and son got on badly. When his father died many years later Hammett held for the funeral

but refused to attend it. By the time the young man was twenty he had left or lost half-a-dozen jobs, started to drink, and caught a dose of clap. At twenty-one he took a job as a Pinkerton detective, and held it for three years until he joined the Army in 1918. He went back to Pinkerton's after his discharge a year later but was now a sick man, troubled by the tuberculosis that affected him for the rest of his life. In October 1920 he was admitted to public health hospital, weighing no more than 130lbs, and was immediately classed as 100 per cent disabled. He emerged several months later, patched up but not cured and with his pension cut by half, worked for Pinkerton's San Francisco office, and gave up his job as a detective finally at the end of 1921.

In later years Hammett played up his work as a Pinkerton man, and played down his illness. Mr Layman casts doubt on Hammett's connection with the four big cases he claimed to have worked on, but he must have been good at the job to have been so readily re-engaged by the agency when obviously a sick man. During almost the whole of the 1920s he was wretchedly, although intermittently, ill. He had married Jose, a nurse at the hospital, they had a small daughter, and "lived a simple life punctuated by the struggle to meet their monthly bills". When their daughter Mary Jane was born, Hammett slept in the hall of their apartment because he had been told that he might infect the baby.

It was in these miserable circumstances that he began to write short stories. By 1925 he was selling up to twenty stories a year to the pulp magazines that had become popular in the early years of the decade, but according to Mr Layman was "barely getting by" financially. He took a job as copywriter for a San Francisco jewellery firm, but within a few months collapsed at work, and was found lying in a pool of blood. He now had another daughter, his recovery was slow (he was on 100 per cent disability pension again), and Jose took the children to live in the country for the sake of economy. Her departure marked the effective end of their marriage. Success was round the corner, and he was about to enter the world in which Lillian Hellman and Nunnally Johnson knew him.

His first book, *Red Harvest*, originally called "The Cleansing of Poisonville", appeared early in 1929, *The Dain Curse* in July, *The Maltese Falcon* early in the following year. They had been written for serial publication in *Black Mask*, but it was not until 1930 that Hammett's first book publication that made him famous: *The Maltese Falcon* as "the best detective story America has yet produced" was typical. The chorus was, and to a large extent remains, American. In Britain, Hammett has

never been regarded so highly as Raymond Chandler.

With fame came the call to Hollywood, the immensely heavy drinking, the long-lasting affair with Hellman (although other women were not neglected), money given, and at times almost thrown away. He wrote two more books, *The Glass Key* (1931) and *The Thin Man* (1934), but afterwards there were only book titles. He provided original stories for some "Thin Man" films, and had his name on a comic strip for a few months and that was all. He was given a \$1000 dollars-a-week contract by MGM as general novelist, adviser, and although three times taken off the payroll for "simply disappearing while a movie he was involved with was being shot", he was hired again each time. In the mid-1930s his income was about \$100,000 a year, yet it did not quite match his expenditure. He lived in a Beverly Hills mansion, leased a limousine and hired a chauffeur. He was in great demand at parties, and much praised by intellectuals. Many called him the technical link between Dreiser and Hemingway. Gide said that the dialogue of *Red Harvest* gave pointers to Hemingway and Faulkner. The praise did not deceive him. He knew that his last book showed a marked decline, and wrote to Hellman about Nick and Nora Charles: "Maybe there are better writers in the world, but nobody ever invented a more insufferably smug pair of characters".

The last phase of his career began with his enrolment in the US Army in September, 1942, to serve in the Signal Corps. He was sent to the barren volcanic island of Adak in Alaska, where he edited a camp newspaper, and was part-author of a booklet on the war against the Japanese in the Aleutians. He was much liked by the young soldiers, who called him Pop. As Mr Layman says, it is astonishing that he was ever accepted for military service. He was forty-eight years old, tuberculosis still troubled him at times, his teeth were very bad (he was rejected once because of them), and after the Spanish Civil War began he seems to have given public support to almost any Left-wing cause that asked for it, so that he was politically suspect. The FBI started a file on him, and said that his support for Communist or Communist front organizations amounted to \$1000 a month. The Bureau's investigations were so inept that for two years they were unable to confirm that he was in the Army, and when they learned that he had been sent to Adak, they considered bringing charges against him for impersonating a US soldier. After his discharge in September 1945 "his primary activities were drinking and reading", but the money kept coming in, now chiefly for radio serials. Late in 1948 his health broke down again,

and he was told by the doctor that if he did not give up drinking he would be dead in a few months. On that day he became an abstainer.

In 1951 he was brought before a US Court to testify regarding a bail fund instituted by the Civil Rights Congress. Hammett was Chairman of the Congress, four Communist leaders for whom bail had been posted failed to surrender to the authorities, and the Court asked Hammett for the names of the contributors to the fund, and about other matters. His testimony, in which he consistently pleaded the Fifth Amendment, is printed here in full, and his stone-walling does not justify the heroic gloss put on the episode in Hellman's reminiscences. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, served five of them, and said afterwards that going to prison was like going home.

It is far from certain that he understood the ruinous nature of his decision. When he came out of prison he found his radio shows cancelled, and his income attached by the Internal Revenue Service. His books were out of print and remained so, since any money from them would have gone to pay back taxes, so that he refused permission to reprint them. The last ten years of his life were spent in a cottage twenty miles north of Manhattan, lent him rent-free by a politically sympathetic doctor. Here he read a great deal, but wrote nothing. Interviewed in 1957 by the FBI, he told them truthfully that he was "essentially without income". To a journalist from the *Washington Post* he said that he kept three typewriters in the cottage "chiefly to remind myself that I was once a writer". Asked why he had stopped writing he said that he found he was repeating himself. "It is the beginning of the end when you discover you have style". In these last years he refused to see even old friends, with the exception of Lillian Hellman. He died in January 1961, killed not by the tuberculosis that had haunted him throughout his adult life, but by cancer. Dorothy Parker, Leonard Bernstein and Lionel Trilling were among those who attended the funeral service, and Hellman delivered a eulogy.

The American crime story (distinct from the detective story) has produced three writers of great talent, Hammett, Chandler and Ross Macdonald, and a comparison between Hammett's and Chandler's lives and talents is prompted by this biography. There are some similarities. Success came late to both men, to Chandler much later than Hammett, both went to Hollywood and disliked a lot of what they saw; both drank hard and could be quarrelsome or rude. But the differences are much greater, and it is difficult not to conclude, after looking again at Frank MacShane's thorough biography of Chandler, that Hammett did what Chandler only wrote about.

Jerry Spier, in *Raymond Chandler*, a useful guide to Chandler's work and ideas, deprecates the view that Chandler "married his mother", but the interpretation seems reasonable in relation to a man who lived with his mother until she died and then, at the age of thirty-six, married a woman eighteen years older than himself. Hammett might have seduced a nymphet but he would never have married his mother. He was a hard man, hard particularly on himself and what he had failed to do. Chandler would not have been capable of that remark about the smugness of Nick and Nora Charles. He loved his own creations too much for that.

The differences show in the writing. Hammett's style was, almost from the beginning, original, bony, drained of colour, lacking delicacy but full of power, a perfect style for describing violent action without moral comment. It is true that at the beginning this was pretty well all he could do. As Richard Layman perceptively says, the "hard-boiled" fiction in *Black Mask* sprang from the naturalistic writing of Dreiser and Frank Norris, but "degraded, frein

## MACMILLAN REFERENCE BOOKS

# TWENTIETH CENTURY WRITERS SERIES

the librarian's guide  
to popular literature



## TWENTIETH CENTURY CRIME AND MYSTERY WRITERS

EDITED BY JOHN M REILLY

Named as 'Outstanding Reference Book of 1981' by the American Library Association

Nominated for the Edgar Allan Poe Award, sponsored by the Crime Writers of America

Nominated for the Library Association Besterman Medal 1980

This highly-acclaimed reference book provides detailed information on 614 English-language writers of crime and mystery fiction. Each entry consists of:

"a biography  
"a complete bibliography  
"a signed critical essay  
"in many cases, comment by the author  
his or her own work  
1600pp £24.00 0 333 30107 2  
June 1980

## TWENTIETH CENTURY CHILDREN'S WRITERS

EDITED BY DANIEL KIRKPATRICK  
Named as 'Outstanding Reference Book of 1978' by the American Library Association

"comprehensive, accurate, and with a high degree of objectivity. It will be indispensable to libraries and all concerned with children's literature."  
- British Book News

1524pp £24.00 0 333 23414  
July 1978

## TWENTIETH CENTURY SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS

EDITED BY CURTIS S SMITH

This is the first ever reference book to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on contemporary science fiction writers - 580 authors selected by a distinguished international advisory board.  
800pp £28.00 0 333 31945 1  
Forthcoming September 1981

Other titles to watch for in this series

## TWENTIETH CENTURY ROMANCE WRITERS

## TWENTIETH CENTURY WESTERN WRITERS



4 Little Essex Street,  
LONDON WC2R 3LF

John M. Reilly







painted him warts and all and followed up some of the hidden threads in his story. She is a careful historian but not a natural biographer. Taylor's few pages on Morel are still worth re-reading to catch the spirit of the man. More important, for Professor Cline has done a job which needed doing, she might have used the wealth of recent secondary material to have moved out from her rather restricted canvas. The book's sub-title, "strategies of protest", suggests a study of Morel's techniques of mass mobilization and an assessment of the effectiveness of his campaigns. Professor Cline rightly stresses the single-minded concentration and the journalistic and organizational talents of her subject, but she is rarely drawn to comment on the characteristics of a period which saw the proliferation of pressure-groups within the foreign policy complex both on the left and the right (the terms are somewhat inappropriate) and in other countries as well as in Britain. Morel played a central role in enlisting groups which were just coming to political prominence at a time of shifting domestic and foreign concerns. His perceptions, methods and success (the marriage between the UDC and Labour party is a case in point) could tell us far more about these critical years than Professor Cline offers.

Is this the success story Taylor sketched in *The Trouble Makers*? Morel created movements which could not be disregarded yet he failed to achieve his ultimate goals. The UDC reached its height in a period when the outbreak of war had tarnished the reputation of the diplomats and when, its grim realities had discredited the techniques of the "old diplomacy", clipped not by parliament, nor the

people, but by the prime minister, the service departments and the Treasury. This was not the revolution demanded by Morel. The Foreign Office countered his demands for democratization by re-asserting the need for professionalism and isolation from the dangerous currents of ignorant public opinion. They argued that the management of foreign affairs, a delicate business at best, must be left to the experts. After the war, the reformers intended to make the Office more effective and better prepared to handle the wider range of responsibilities permanently placed on the diplomatic map. Even these voices were stifled with the "return to normalcy" and the drive for economy. The League (Morel's *bête noire*, among others) inherited the mantle of the UDC. The Foreign Office viewed its activities in the same light as Morel's campaigns.

Morel proclaimed the evils of the past and present but offered little positive guidance for the future. He was a true dissenter but not really a visionary. And in the end, he was defeated. Many were converted to his version of the wickedness of the diplomats but the system of diplomacy remained entrenched. The campaign for the democratic control of diplomacy goes on still; the recent creation of a Foreign and Commonwealth Commons select committee is but one more chapter in a long story. Outside parliament, it has proved to be an uphill battle to mobilize dissent in order to effect changes in foreign policy. The instances of success have been surprisingly few. Herein lies the reason why the "trouble makers" attract historical defenders and why one wishes Professor Cline had written a more ambitious book.



"Celia in an armchair", a lithograph in an edition of 74, portraying Celia Birtwell, (1980, 40x48 ins) is included in "Celia Flowers", an exhibition at the Knoedler Gallery, 22 Cork St, London W1 until June 20 of all David Hockney's colour lithographs and aquatints of these two subjects from 1965-1980.

## Ordering the New World

By Peter Marshall

DAVID GRAYSON ALLEN:  
In English Ways

The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts Bay in the Seventeenth Century  
312pp. University of North Carolina Press. \$27.  
0 9087 1448 2

ALICE MANSON JONES:  
Wealth of a Nation To Be

The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution  
494pp. Columbia University Press. \$31.25.  
0 231 03659 0

American history has been commonly seen to record a process of development clearly distinct from that which was occurring in contemporary Europe: if the colonies of settlement enjoyed, in their early years, fewer material benefits, their subsequent progress was both more rapid and, even more significantly, shared by a greater part of their population, than proved the case in the mother country. Over the years economic success, social cohesion and political commitment provided essential components of an advance to nationhood. How far these factors should be regarded as fundamental and deliberate agents of change, how far they should be considered as no more than the incidental and pragmatic acquisitions of circumstance, are topics which historians have debated for many years. As the evidence mounts, so does the doubt. Studies of unquestioned merit leave the matter far from resolved.

David Grayson Allen's investigation is both intensive and limited, being devoted to a study of the origins and nature of the settlement in the seventeenth century of five Massachusetts towns. His comparison of practices in the parts of England from which the migrants originated, with those established as bases of the new developments, leads him to conclude that past circumstances exerted decisive influences upon later endeavours, until the inhabitants had essentially reproduced what they knew it before their emigration. Under this searching scrutiny the hypothesis of Frederick Jackson Turner—that the frontier process stimulated the growth of a uniquely democratic society in the New World—finds further support. Neither in

tion of property nor of popular access to political office did the five towns display any dramatic lurch towards the creation of material and civic equality. In the later years of the colonial period the growth of colonial institutions and the consequent reduction of local autonomy is seen to be marked, in these five instances, by the installation of forms of government resembling those of eighteenth-century England rather than demonstrating the emergence of a new social order. In this account, continuity would seem to receive greater emphasis than change.

Dr Allen is not alone in reaching such conclusions, for his analysis of migration and settlement can be seen as inquiring in detail into the condition which T. H. Breen has entitled "Persistent Localism". Total agreement on the factors forming and sustaining the Old World presence in the New is not to be found in their accounts: Breen lays emphasis on the impress of recent English political and religious events while Allen stresses the impact of economic and social circumstances. Both agree, however, that in the shaping of these new societies novelty was not the aim. It is an argument which, no matter how skillfully deployed, will be by some found unacceptable, or qualified by those who believe that, in the longer term, general change can be demonstrated and its causes traced to the earliest days of settlement. But how long must the longer term be? Can the transformation be found to have occurred during the colonial period of American history?

The degree to which the social and economic structure of American life had developed and changed by the eve of the Revolution has been assessed by Alice Hanson Jones. Her study of the material wealth of the colonies marks the completion of a doctoral dissertation which the demands of private life and the pursuit of a distinguished professional career had halted for some thirty years. There are strong grounds for gratitude at her persistence and reason to believe that the enforced delay may have conferred benefits: the value of this analysis resides not only in findings which may well establish in detail what many may have believed, without evidence, to have been the case, but particularly in the clarity with which the means of investigation are set out, a quality not always evident in the work of younger scholars.

The extent, nature, and distribution of colonial wealth has been examined by Professor Jones through the analysis of estates registered in 1774 for probate in sample counties of New England: the Middle Col-

onies, and the South. It is shown, as might be expected, that slaves gave first place to the South; agricultural products gained a distant second place for the Middle Colonies; New England formed the poorest region, benefiting somewhat from its commercial shipping, and industrial activities. Where Professor Jones's findings are of great interest, however, is in their assignment of wealth among the population of the colonies: the richest 10 per cent of those whose estates were wound up in 1774 held almost 55 per cent of the total funds—a slightly higher percentage in New England, somewhat less in the South, even including the assets of slavery, and less than still 42 per cent, in the Middle Colonies. From these figures it is clear that while the Revolution may have waged for notions of political equality it did not spring from comparable social and economic conditions. Though circumstances were in no way egalitarian, such estimates are possible suggest to Professor Jones that the wealth of the colonies had become, *per capita*, if not so great, at least not startlingly less than that of the mother country.

These studies, separated by more than a century in respect of their principal periods of interest, nevertheless appear remarkably compatible in their general conclusions: that American society contained economic divisions of "unmistakable magnitude". The relationship of what exactly the disjunction of the concept of American equality and the structure of American society, as demonstrated to have been existing long before Independence and was to persist long after. It is not therefore necessary to conclude that the expansion of America merely paralleled the development of Europe; it does, however, demand that the causes of change be subjected to further scrutiny.

*Princetonians 1769-1775: A Biographical Dictionary*, by Richard A. Harrison (585pp. Princeton University Press. £23.35; 0 691 04675 1) is a second volume in a series of biographical sketches of students who attended the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University). The volume takes the story of the College and its alumni up to the beginning of the American Revolution. It records not only the contributions of the early sons of Nassau Hall to the formation of the Republic but also the role of the College itself as a major component in the evolution of the first national education. Only two of the 178 students at Nassau Hall during these years were prominent in the ranks of American Independence.

## The calculus of conflict

By John Keegan

DAVID WILKINSON:  
Deadly Quarrels  
Lewis F. Richardson and the Statistical Study of War  
266pp. University of California Press. 0 520 03829 0

Lewis Fry Richardson was an unusual figure, yet recognizably of his times. A Quaker, he declared as a conscientious objector during the First World War he served in an ambulance unit. After he war he devoted his life to pacifist objectives though in a thoroughly practical way. He was a scientist by training and had no time for what he called rhetoric. Instead, he set about codifying the frequency, magnitude, duration, complexity and, as far as was possible, causal factors of wars since 1820, in the hope of being able to prevent outbreaks by an understanding of symptoms. It was a lonely task. "There are many anti-war societies," he observed at the end of his life, "but they are concerned with propaganda, not research" (today he would have to make exception for the Stockholm Institute). But he was not discouraged, even by the amorphousness of his data and the elusiveness of firm conclusions. Those he arrived at, together with his workings, were published as *Arms and Insecurity* and *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels*. The latter is the better known and its exegesis is the subject of David Wilkinson's book.

Professor Wilkinson, though now a political scientist, had a mathematical training like Richardson's and, as a behaviourist, was attracted to Richardson's work because it provided the largest body of statistical material related to a fundamental political question: Why do wars happen? Temperamentally he holds to the view that the truths of politics are not self-evident; that social causes and effects are not plain as day, but complex and obscure, to be known not by direct intuition but only by systematic, methodical and laborious research, applying the methods of the more successful

natural sciences." But he had doubts both about the rigour of Richardson's methods and the completeness of his data. He therefore set himself to go back over the material, further codify it and then ask fellow researchers to consider proceeding from the consolidated base to a renewed exploration of Richardson's great question.

Richardson's approach was thus: he counted the wars which ended between 1820 and 1952 (his total was 315), estimated the number of pairs of opposed belligerents (780), assigned a duration to each war and a magnitude, which was a logarithm of the number of dead, and finally coded each contest by reference to fifty-nine variables. Eighteen of these, written as lower case Roman letters, were held to make for clarity; twenty-five, written as Roman capitals, to make for clarity; sixteen, written as Greek lower-case letters, were held to be ambivalent. A system of arrows and accents denoted relationships between the variables. As an example of how his coding worked in practice, Wilkinson chooses the China War of 1856-60. Here "CDFHIO" reveals that the British and Chinese traded, were of markedly different physical types, customarily dressed differently, had markedly different marriage customs, felt their religions or philosophies of life to be in contrast, spoke different languages and had conflicting legal systems.

In a second set of codes, the sequence "M 14 A arrow H arrow K two arrows X two arrows" (the direction of the arrow had a special significance) denotes that a previous Anglo-Chinese war had ended fourteen years earlier, that the Chinese interfered with British trade and restricted British immigration and that the two races were exceptionally ignorant of each other and marked by unusually strong racial pride.

Richardson then began to count, tallied his letters, and, finally, applied statistical technique to their frequency. His professional work was in meteorology, for which he was elected to the Royal Society, and he had, therefore, a close familiarity with the technique of forecasting. This was useful, because he was ultimately looking for discordances. After clustering

factors which made for war, and others associated with the peaceful resolution of conflict, he looked above all for similar sets which had different outcomes, feeling that those would best repay deeper analysis. Hope inspired his vision. If he could find circumstances which in some cases precipitated war but in others did not, he was encouraged to believe that humanity could be taught in all such cases to work its way through to a settlement. And thence to tackle the circumstances which always seemed to lead to war.

He never really got there, though he did propose some interesting observations about the declining frequency and duration of wars in his period, the "pacifying effect of common government" (civil wars are less common than international wars, and least likely in long-established states), the tendency of alliances and outbreaks to association, the rarity of multi-combatant wars and the difficulty of assigning any mathematical value to economic causes. There were some odd statistical sports, like the association of Christianity and the Spanish language with bellicosity—"Roman Catholicism and weightlifting" by the mathematician in Nigel Balchin's *Small Back Room*. There was also a suggestion of periodicity, with a twenty-four year cycle overlying a one hundred-two hundred year cycle, which—with apologies to the author—does ring an intuitive bell with historians.

But in general a historian's reaction to Richardson's work is a double-edged sword. The firm conclusions look too obvious; for example, the observation of an association between alliances and outbreaks is, of course, completely circular. The tentative conclusions require more work. And it is there, as Wilkinson himself points out, that the foundations of Richardson's mathematics start to go soggy. For Richardson assembled his data largely from the Fourteenth Edition of the *Britannica*, *Keating's* and the *Cambridge Modern History*. None is to be derided, naturally. But, as Richardson surely ought to have been aware, the compression of material necessary to such publications requires in itself a system of coding which will not be standard and which a secondary codifier has no means of

evaluating. We may, therefore, suspect that Richardson's historical conclusions have roughly the same validity as would his meteorological forecasts, had those been based on readings made with a selection of unsynchronized chronometers.

Yet none of this is to say that Richardson's purpose was not wholly admirable, or that his eclectic approach is not worthwhile. His trouble may have been that he chose to count the wrong things, and over too short a period. Religion, language, physical appearance are facts of life, and most of them ineradicable. They would appear in a statistical count of almost any recurrent human activity, and bear whatever significance the codifier chooses to give them. More profitable would have been a count of events specific to warfare—battles, sieges, blockades—and recourse to map-plotting. Very striking patterns would have then jumped off the paper. There have, for example, been seven battles of Adrianople (Edirne), a small town on a river confluence 130 miles west of Istanbul, spread over the period 325-1911. There have been four battles of Acre, three of Antioch, seven of Constantinople, nine of Jerusalem. And these, of course, are only titular ascriptions. If events are plotted rather than place-names, it quickly becomes obvious that most military activity takes place in quite extraordinarily circumscribed localities: a narrow strip of Mediterranean littoral between Beirut and Alexandria, the shores of the Bosphorus, the plain of the Po, the estuaries of the Scheldt and Meuse, the course of the Vistula, the Crimea and environs, the Tigris valley, southern Manchuria and perhaps a dozen other quite small regions. Almost all stand at

political or cultural junctions, or in corridors between cultures and politics, so that the observation threatens to chase its tail if it is left there.

It becomes more promising if associated with the buffer-state idea and the demilitarized zone principle. Neither has a consistent record of success. But the nuclear revolution puts an unprecedentedly high premium on the avoidance of local outbreaks which threaten to draw in the great powers. And, where neutralized or effectively demilitarized zones exist, as in Korea or along the Swiss-Austrian-Yugoslav belt, there is a noticeable absence of day-by-day alarms and excursions if lack of newspaper interest is taken as a measure.

Two other large trends would repay study by the peacemakers, both of periodicity. Richardson detected a twenty-four year cycle in war-fighting. He seems not to have tested it against any of the theories of trade cycle—perhaps, given the readiness of economists to disagree about almost everything, understandably, but nevertheless it was worth a try. Nor does he seem to have taken the generational cycle into account. Blainey's *Causes of War*, in other respects a disappointing book, did make the inherently convincing suggestion that nothing makes for a long peace so much as a thoroughly painful experience of what the glories of the battlefield means in practice. The idea is Hobbesian, and therefore unfashionable. But if the liberal belief in the power of education to civilize has any life left in it, it could be deployed in a better direction than in transmitting what are now grandparent's memories of the Second World War to their grandchildren.

## James Barnett THE FIRING SQUAD

"Barnett has emerged... a fully fledged novelist with a theme of weight pent behind the prose and... the gifts needed to make it tell to the fullest..."

H. R. F. Keating, *The Times*

"Barnett produces the most authentic police-investigation novels being written in Britain, with all the added pace, flair and sour humour of *The Sweeney* at its best."

Martin Hillman, *Tribune*

£3.95

## Peter Niesewand THE WORD OF A GENTLEMAN

"Both a compulsive thriller, and a study of the way in which power is held by those who use it for their own ends... very exciting."

W. J. Nesbitt, *Northern Echo*

"A superior, high-tension conspiratorial thriller."

Matthew Coady, *Guardian*

£6.95

## Andrew Coburn OFF DUTY

"Tough, seamy, superior writing, the pinnacle of the genre."

Observer

"My highest recommendation. Leanly vivid writing, an authentic feel of evil, a sense of things unsaid."

H. R. F. Keating, *The Times*

£6.95

## R. E. Harrington THE DOOMSDAY GAME

"An engulging thriller that makes *Watergate* look like a Sunday school outing."

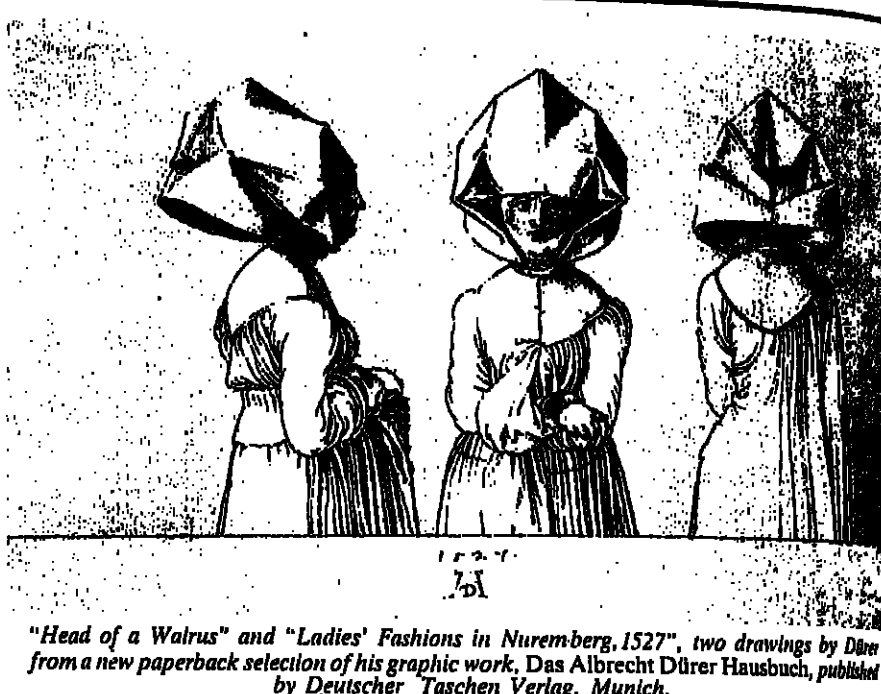
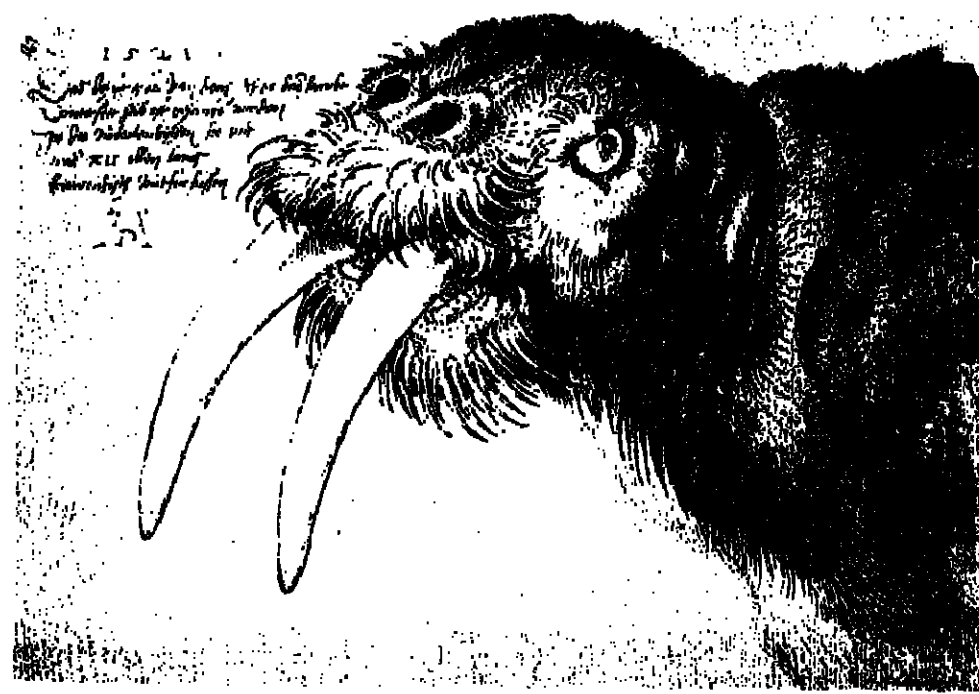
Christopher Wordsworth, *Observer*

£6.95

Secker & Warburg

John Keegan





"Head of a Walrus" and "Ladies' Fashions in Nuremberg, 1527", two drawings by Dürer from a new paperback selection of his graphic work, Das Albrecht Dürer Hausbuch, published by Deutscher Taschen Verlag, Munich.

## In the liberal tradition

By C. J. Rawson

IRVIN STOCK:  
Fiction as Wisdom From Goethe to  
Bellow  
237pp. Pennsylvania State University  
Press. £10.20.  
0 271 00253 0

Irvin Stock believes that literature should give pleasure and wisdom, and that to share these is at least as legitimate an interest of criticism as to display expertise; that "if a book is alive, it is a man speaking to men"; that a personal and affectionate reading is better than "theory" and that seeing is better than seeing through. No sound is heard of the narratological cavalry riding their high horses to market, or no more than a distant receding clamour when Stock quietly detached himself from those who hold that a "novel has no meaning except what each reader puts into it". It is a long time since that particular clamour has seemed either distant or receding, even in the pages of those clamouring against it, and this is accordingly a civilized book.

It begins with a not altogether well-conducted rehabilitation of *Wilhelm Meister*. Mr Stock notes its abundance of incident and character by contrast with *Madame Bovary*, and asserts that this does not make the book "shapeless", as hasty readers, inclined to consider Goethe as "ill educated", in the responsibilities of serious fiction, have supposed: "his story has been deliberately shaped to resemble the puzzling drift of life, so that the search for the lessons of it all will be opposed, both for hero and reader, by a difficulty resembling life's own". The noteworthy thing is that this "complexity" does not, as in most great writers, lead to a "tragic view". Goethe's bent is practical, constructive, almost optimistic, and converts the whole question of life's manifold difficulty into "a problem to be solved", a reduction of scale, if you like, without reduction of content, in which a quest for success and happiness is affirmed as man's proper business by a "great writer". Learned in life's dangers and difficulties.

Goethe, told Eckermann that the novel's "rich, manifold life" could not be compressed into a simplifying "theme", but that the truest key was to be found at the end, in Friedrich's remark to Wilhelm: "To my mind you resemble Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom." *Wilhelm Meister* achieves its rapport with the reader not on a plane of "moods to be shared" or in terms of "psychological or pious detail" but in a quest for resolutions. The harping on "problems to be solved", a phrase which occurs with a somewhat deadening frequency, conveys not so much (as Stock intends) the cause of the modern reader's alleged difficulties with this work, as Stock's difficulties in finding words that will offer a more accurate focus without placing further obstacles to the reader's sympathy.

But he does succeed in conveying that all the problem-solving does not turn *Wilhelm Meister* into a novel of "ideas" of the more abstract kind, the kind which some readers think all novels of ideas belong to. One strength of this book is that it is among other things a quiet celebration of that somewhat maligned form, more heartily championed by Mary McCarthy in her recent book, *Ideas and the Novel*. The thread runs through all the essays, more or less unofficially, notably in a spirited defence of the "Deronda" portions of *Daniel Deronda*, and in a very well-executed study of the novels of Mary McCarthy herself. Playing over the "ideas" in *Wilhelm Meister*, giving them freedom and life, as it plays over the characters and controls their destinies, is Goethe's celebrated "Olympian" blend of omniscience and "objectivity", beside which Flaubert's objectivity "is a mere literary device". Goethe's irony, too, is a detachment and lucidity beside which that of Flaubert seems the angry disappointment of a persistently youthful mind, ... ironical at the expense of a world which has violated ideals hotly cherished. There is truth in this, though only of a partial kind, and space no doubt for a more thorough treatment of the ways in which Flaubert's "irony" sought to transcend the very attachments which it is here accused of being an expression of.

What is less easy to justify is Stock's sense that the point he is making about Goethe can be allowed to pass without enlargement or demonstration. He too easily falls back on the notion of an ideally refined reader, or more modestly (but the point has been made before it is withdrawn) or rephrased, and the rephrasing may seem equally evasive, that "category of readers ... whose tastes this book is shaped to satisfy". The startling definition: "it is taken from a remark in the novel which Stock tendentially steers to his own ends. Hirschfeld had begun by asserting, again with the not wholly earned support of higher authority, that this novel 'is not only, as Yeats said, the wisest novel ever written, wisdom being ideas about life that do not betray. It is also one of the most entrancing and beautiful of novels.' The lack of indication of where Yeats's supposed statement ends and Stock's appropriation begins is disturbing. The nearest thing I know to "the wisest novel ever written" is Yeats's speaking to A.B. of "that book which I still think the wisest of all books", which may seem a shade more informal. I do not know anywhere in Yeats where the wisdom of *Wilhelm Meister* is defined in the words Stock uses here, just as I cannot find any hint in Stock of Yeats's least equally famous reassertion about *Wilhelm Meister* and Goethe's deficient attainment of Only of Being. Nevertheless, the study of *Wilhelm Meister* is a welcome and sometimes eloquent defence of a nowadays undervalued work. A companion essay on *Elective Affinities* is a more routine and schematic, a slighter and more perfunctory affair. But for modern readers it is *Wilhelm Meister*, which needed rescuing.

Mr Stock is generally unsatisfactory with authors whom he brings in as third parties to his argument, with Flaubert or Yeats in the Goethe discussion, or with Swift or Sade in a more ambitious and more exciting essay on *The Brothers Karamazov*. We could pass such things over as relatively harmless pieces of incidental name-dropping if Stock were not plainly using them as authorities, or as coordinates in some otherwise rather unspic charting of literary history, or worst of all as supposed focal points in a high-sounding critical definition. Take Sade. After a vivid opening tribute to Dostoevsky's last novel, alive with conviction and communicated delight, full of an eloquent and precise understanding of Dostoevsky's "rich education in the painful secrets of the inner life", we are suddenly pulled up by the assertion that "no other writer (except Sade) focuses so deliberately on cruelty or evokes pity with such irresistible poignance". The sentence is intended to count. It closes a strong opening section. It is not developed, and ends by a last-minute loss of nerve. The final word "poignance" is an odd drop into mannerism, at precisely the point when an outrageous and unexamined parallel is introduced, and then left, hollowly resonating, in the air.

Sade was hardly an author of the "inner life", except in the limited sense, well-recognized by most of his more serious commentators (and by himself), that his cruel fantasies were largely mental concoctions, imaginary rather than imagined, a pedantically elaborate gigantification of sex in the head. The content of the fantasies is of course physical, usually concerned with running through the various positional and penetrational permutations available among a given number of persons, along with a simplified register of emotional reactions which hardly transcends the stylized rhetoric of, excessive feeling common in the fiction of horror, exorcising or exquisite agonies. It is, in other words, language detached from the realities it deals with (if that is what they are), and in this sense the very opposite of everything Stock values and celebrates in his sober and often sensitive book. The importance of Sade in the history of fiction has been persistently underestimated, partly because the bulk of his writings has often been unavailable, and largely because, when available, it has been found by many to be unreadable in bulk. But Flaubert read all he could, and Sade leads in more essential ways to Flaubert, of whom Stock takes a Dostoevsky. This is perhaps one of those rare occasions when Stock gives us a fashionable stereotype, which would link Sade and Dostoevsky merely because they have both been taken up as classics of some fashionable confabulation.

But in fact the essay quickly recovers and is one of the best things in the book. It is particularly good at showing how a novel ostensibly reflecting in absolute, and by an author potently addicted to absolute forms of thought, actually emerges as some-

thing more tempered and oscillating, rich with a sense of the particular, and with shadings and unresolved tensions both on the plane of feeling and on that of ideology or belief. It brings out the differences between the real-life Dostoevsky and the fictional realization of his most cherished positions: how the claim of "Christianity's power to save the world is far less sweeping here than it is in his letters and his journalism"; how "Alyosha's great 'idea' does not save him from his own compromises with the world's evils"; how the final speech of Alyosha after Iusha's funeral shows "how little — and how much — Dostoevsky's faith can do for man".

Mr Stock is always searching to define the degree of literalness with which the language of novels demands to be taken, and to explore the reader's entitlement to take non-literally those articles of religious belief which Dostoevsky himself may have accepted in a bindingly fundamentalist sense. He confronts the old question of how "liberal secular humanists" can respond to an author so illiberal and of such an uncompromising religious cast of thought as Dostoevsky. The question is a perennial one, and Stock's answers offer no surprises; they would be suspect if they did. He falls back honourably and without patness on that "liberal imagination" of which the great spokesmen in our century have been Foster and Trilling, and which involves saying "not yes or no, but yes and no", a yes and a no not of even-handed, abstract adjudication, but rooted in the limitless particularity of things.

Most of Stock's subjects are novels which themselves belong to a "liberal" tradition, instead of being, like Dostoevsky's, transcendent counterstatements. They have, as he says of *The Blithedale Romance*, an "awareness of the mind's many, and often contradictory, ways of being right; that tentativeness — or serious play — with ideas, that continuous irony" which Foster valued, and which Stock "is I think wrong not to see in Flaubert (of Conrad he tells us very little). His choice of novels, excluding Goethe and Dostoevsky and *Daniel Deronda*, is on a rather smaller scale, or one that poses fewer problems of definition to his scheme: two essays on *Gide* (*The Counterfeiters* and *Thérèse*), one on *The Blithedale Romance*, one on William Hale White's fiction (reprinted as a shade self-indulgently from Stock's own standard book on that author), one on Thomas Mann's relatively little-known work, *The Holy Sinner*, and one each on the works of Mary McCarthy and Saul Bellow.

The essay on *The Holy Sinner* was rejected by PMLA, a fact reported with some triumph by Stock, who is able to append to it a letter from Mann himself, who praised it for finding the book "enjoyable" and "funny". I do not know if it is from this same letter that the dust-jacket quotes Mann's further comment that the essay "is undoubtedly the best analysis and exegesis of the novel I ever read". But Stock then states signals, comment from Mary McCarthy and Saul Bellow, perhaps also in letters, again quoted on the cover, and when he could not

approach his other authors with the same fair expectation of a reply, as in the case of Goethe, he simply went to someone else, obtaining for example from Thornton Wilder a statement duly quoted in the blurbs, that *Wilhelm Meister* "you have polished beauties and structural elements that had escaped me".

What Bellow praised was the rightness of Stock's emphasis on the Romanticism, the early Romanticism of much that I have written. And writing about the importance of "being", the "power to feel", in Bellow's novels, and associates it with the English Romantics, especially Wordsworth and Blake, "the bright alternative romanticism, rather than the whiling or despairing kind of other times and places". The involved course, the extravagance of self-regard, of much of Bellow's writing will seem to many admirers as well as others, close to that Shandean or sub-Shandean strain which is an earlier "romanticism" still, and a more persistent irritant in our times. I do not share Stock's enthusiasm for Bellow after *Henderson the Rain King*, having failed three times to finish *Herzog* and *Bagel*. I suspect forever in *Henderson's* Ciff, but I imagine that even enthusiasts (unless they are as enthusiastic as Bellow himself) may find the treatment of the novels rather perfunctory and uninspired, a dull novel-by-novel run-through which nothing in the occasion of composition seems to have helped it to be.

By contrast, the study of *Madame Bovary* began life as a University of Minnesota pamphlet, calling precisely for such a run-through, but achieving much more. Here again Stock engages with the question of "ideas" in the novel: with Miss McCarthy's celebrated defence of these (though Bellow her most recent statement), and with the novels themselves, their interest in the life of ideas and the person alive by them. He deftly links the "realistic" quality of the novel, ascribing them at one point to complete rather than to *symbolic* reality, rather than *symbolic* reality, which brings out beautifully the continuing significance of autobiographical incidents from *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (the account of the young Mary's involvement with Calixte, Caesar and the quelling Gaudin) to itself send people post-haste to the book. And he is especially good among the novels, on *The Grapes of Wrath* and *A Chained Life*, the latter of which he regards as "the best so far". The verdict survives intact in an appendix, and *Callaghan's Missionaries*, which must be a biographical novel over written about a biographical novel, and is too recent to get into the book.

The plea on Mary McCarthy transcends its original genre. Without the apparatus of bibliographical information of the original pamphlet, it holds its own as a valuable introduction, as well as being a perceptive and attractive discussion for the more recent reader. Miss McCarthy's statement that this is certainly the best and most done-on-me" seems right. I have seen the competition hasn't been done-on-me" but this essay will survive fiercer than it has had to face to

## FICTION

JOHN GARDNER:  
Licence Renewed  
270pp. Cape and Hodder and  
Stoughton. £6.50.  
0 224 01941 1

The first pseudo-Bond novel appeared in 1958, four years after Ian Fleming's death: here, thirteen years later, is the second. At first this suggests, hearteningly, that James Bond has joined that small but select club of characters who have been brought back to life after the death of their creators simply because their readers want more of them. But thirteen years is a long time, and during a there has been ample reason to fear that Bond had floated (literally at times) out of the world of fiction into that of cinematic fantasy, which is not quite the same thing. As everyone knows, the Bond novels are an adroit blend of realism and extravagance, and both were necessary: the one helped us swallow the other. Because Sir Hugo Drax had red hair, one ear larger than the other, through plastic surgery, and wore a plain gold Patek Philippe watch with a black leather strap, we accepted that his Moonraker rocket could blow London to bits. The Bond films, on the other hand, dispensed with the realism and concentrated on the extravagance, becoming serious in camp-up absurdity. In this way there became two Bonds, book-Bond and film-Bond, each with its separate public. And a certain hostility arose between them: for the readers, the films were ludicrous and childish travesties; the viewers, if they had ever heard of the books, saw them simply as material to be spoofed, perhaps deservedly. Since Graham's Law operates in the world of entertainment as well as anywhere else, it looked as if the films were winning. But here is another novel, book-Bond making a come-back.

Looking at the original canon after some twenty years confirms their almost mesmerizing readability. "I ask weekly at the library for either Fleming," wrote George Lyttelton to Rupert Hart-Davis in 1957, "but they are always out". How bad, and at the same time compellingly readable, [his] thriller must be. The pattern of all four that I have read is identical. Bond does not attract me, and that man with brains on ice and pitiless eye who organizes the secret service in London seems to be a monument of ineptitude. Everything about Bond and his plans is known long before he arrives anywhere. But I cannot help reading on and there he rich satisfactions...

Indeed there are: the first sixty pages of *Moonraker*, culminating in the triumph of grand-alarmed Drax, the giant centipede in the bed in *From Russia With Love*, the meeting with "Captain M" on the train in *From Russia With Love*; all these and many more vibrant triumphs of excitement. And the willing seem as grotesquely menacing as they ever did. Dr. No, with his metal hands, Le Chiffre with his "Pobocene", Benzardine, Inhaler, Mr Big and his great grey football of a head, Fleming was, in short, a natural writer with a vividly bizarre imagination and a mastery of tenacity. But what strikes one most about his books today is their unassuming aphatic decency. So far from being organs of sex and sadism, as some outraged academics protested at the time, the books are nostalgic excursions into pre-Carnaby Street whimsy. Giller, Sullivan, and the prospect to the Beatles. England is always right, foreigners are always wrong. Fleming's best villains are all foreign. Nobody, at least on the page, is a double agent, or has the casual connection with Philby and the CIA. The books are treated with kindness and understanding, lost coming to us as a traditional aristocracy of the old-fashioned aristocracy, of the old-fashioned aristocracy, of the old-fashioned aristocracy.

packet. Not for nothing did Kingsley Amis, in his affectionate, knowledgeable and perceptive study *The James Bond Dossier* (1965), class Fleming with "those demi-giants of an earlier day, Jules Verne, Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle" (he might have added John Buchan).

Ian Fleming has set his stamp on the story of action and intrigue, bringing it a sense of our time, a power and a flair that will win him readers when all the protests about his supposed deficiencies have been forgotten. He leaves no heirs.

The last sentence has a double irony, for within three years Robert Markham's *Colonel Sun* was published, and Markham was Amis himself. The experiment was an interesting one: Amis was both a first-class writer and a Bond fan, and what he produced was a workmanlike job, though one reader at least blenched to find Bond drinking roach with his old beef, or with anything else for that matter. The local colour (Greece) was well boned up, and Amis gave the politics an original twist: Bond ends by receiving congratulations and thanks from Comrade Kosygin (shades of Rosa Klebb). But in fact Amis could not more write a genuine Bond novel than Fleming could write a genuine Amis novel: literate pastiche and respectful avoidance of parody were no substitute for Fleming's innate virtues. Nor was the experiment repeated: book-Bond was left in full retreat from film-Bond, the Batman from Blades.

The choice, now, of John Gardner to reverse the situation overtops the first irony by several miles, for, as a talented and experienced thriller-writer though he is (and already a resurrection-man: remember the Moriarty books), he came on the scene with the Boyles Oakes series, which in his own words were meant as "an amusing counter-irritant to the excesses of 007".

This seemed to be the way to provide an antidote to the snobbish pseudo-sophistication of the Bond business. Looking back on it, that aim seems pretentious and, happily, Bond changed direction, the books becoming amusing send-ups of themselves when transferred to film.

The enormity of this statement in the present context needs no underlining. For Fleming's publishers to hand over book-Bond to a self-confessed film-Bond man is like the MCC handing over Lord's to Mr Packer. Despite the reassuring Chopping-style jacket of *Licence Renewed*, one finger it fearfully, uncertainly as to how dreadful it is going to be.

Fortunately Mr Gardner is not as bad as his word, though he gets off to a stumbling start. Bond has, disconcertingly, moved with the times (Mr Gardner must just avoid admitting that he must be pushing fifty). The double-0 section has been abolished (though Mr. only just avoids saying "You'll always be 007" to the James'; shades of *Bond Strikes Camp*), and Bond drinks less, smokes cigarettes "with a far content slightly above the market", and has abandoned the Mark II Continental Bentley for a

foreign car with tear-gas ducts in all four wheels. On the other hand, May still reigns in the flat off the King's Road, the breakfast routine is unchanged, and press-ups and target practice are regularly observed.

Bond's adversary on this occasion is Dr Anton Murik, who is planning to justify his own rejected Ultra-Safe (it isn't) Reactor by causing six existing reactors to go wild by switching off their coolant systems. Murik, who is a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge and "not unlike... the late Lord Beaverbrook", is Laird of Murclady in Ross and Cromarty, and is helped in his fell designs by Franco, an international terrorist, and Coker, a sort of Harry Lauder Old Job ("I'm still behind you, Bond, with the wee shooter"). Bond has a wrestling-bout with Coker at the Murclady Games, and lays him out with a whiff of Halothane thoughtfully provided by Q Branch, but even before this has given him the Ganges Groun Gouge, a tactic seemingly in defiance of the Cumberland or Lancashire styles more likely to be observed there.

Q Branch also provides a girl, who seduces Bond perfunctorily ("Well, James, the bed's still there") before the story really starts. He then rejects Murik's mistress ("a trained physicist") in favour of the Laird's ward, Lavender Peacock, whose face is reminiscent of Lauren Bacall and who has firm, important breasts ("under the dress") in splendid proportion to the rest of her body (since she is tall and slender, splendid disproportion might have been better). Lavender, or Dilly as she likes to be called, is actually the "wronged heiress" of Victorian fiction (Dr Anton has fiddled the Lairdship), and holds out till page 218, when she and Bond are twice "united by passion". Palidly pally, as a Bond girl Lavender is a non-starter even though she does put paid to Coker at a crucial moment: she ends by going to "one of the major agricultural colleges".

The action is of the *Diamonds Are Forever* pattern: Bond sells himself to Murik as a potential accomplice, and learns what is going on, or going to go on, at Murik Castle before being rumbled. A vain attempt to escape is followed by torture; being carted off to Peripangan, which seems to be the nerve centre of Operation Meltdown, as the nuclear reactor project is called; and finally a "tag-side scene" at that event in Murik's grand Stabilizer aircraft. It is all briskly enough done, without too many film-Bond absurdities, but the temperature obstinately refuses to rise. It is hard to see why Mr Gardner has created a simulacrum of the Bond world with none of the threatened mockery, but despite his sincere and conscientious efforts it just will not come to life.

The obvious reason for this is that Mr Gardner is not as good a writer as Fleming. It is not so much the small intricacies ("ravage" for ravish, "a fine patina of flour") or the slightly larger clichés ("Bond is far from not been able to savour the views or delight in the beetles of Scotland"), nor even the occasional echo (Murik's ultimatum to the world recalls Blofeld's in *Thunderball*); it is simply that Mr Gardner

cannot command that compelling readability noted by Lyttelton in 1957 and yielded to by many millions since. The flogging of Operation Meltdown is stolidly achieved; the separate fate reserved for Dr Murik has none of the satisfying ghastliness attending the demises of Dr No and Mr Big.

The trouble is that to resurrect Bond you have to be Fleming, for he was his creator in a way that Tarzan or Sherlock Holmes or Billy Bunter clearly weren't theirs. It was Fleming who smoked seventy cigarettes a day, wore dark blue St John's Island cotton shirts and loved scrambled eggs and double portions of orange juice for breakfast; Bond was a kind of *doppelgänger* sent out to enact what Fleming himself had never achieved (this relation is convincingly analysed in John Pearson's masterly *Life of Ian Fleming*). The ease with which Bond appeared (Fleming, forty-three, never having written a novel before, sat down and wrote *Casino Royale* in eight weeks) suggests the tapping of deep imaginative springs. And the novels that succeeded them drew on the same dark source: "the next volume of my autobiography".

The obvious reason for this is that Mr Gardner is not as good a writer as Fleming. It is not so much the small intricacies ("ravage" for ravish, "a fine patina of flour") or the slightly larger clichés ("Bond is far from not been able to savour the views or delight in the beetles of Scotland"), nor even the occasional echo (Murik's ultimatum to the world recalls Blofeld's in *Thunderball*); it is simply that Mr Gardner

cannot command that compelling readability noted by Lyttelton in 1957 and yielded to by many millions since. The flogging of Operation Meltdown is stolidly achieved; the separate fate reserved for Dr Murik has none of the satisfying ghastliness attending the demises of Dr No and Mr Big.

The trouble is that to resurrect Bond you have to be Fleming, for he was his creator in a way that Tarzan or Sherlock Holmes or Billy Bunter clearly weren't theirs. It was Fleming who smoked seventy cigarettes a day, wore dark blue St John's Island cotton shirts and loved scrambled eggs and double portions of orange juice for breakfast; Bond was a kind of *doppelgänger* sent out to enact what Fleming himself had never achieved (this relation is convincingly analysed in John Pearson's masterly *Life of Ian Fleming*). The ease with which Bond appeared (Fleming, forty-three, never having written a novel before, sat down and wrote *Casino Royale* in eight weeks) suggests the tapping of deep imaginative springs. And the novels that succeeded them drew on the same dark source: "the next volume of my autobiography".

The obvious reason for this is that Mr Gardner is not as good a writer as Fleming. It is not so much the small intricacies ("ravage" for ravish, "a fine patina of flour") or the slightly larger clichés ("Bond is far from not been able to savour the views or delight in the beetles of Scotland"), nor even the occasional echo (Murik's ultimatum to the world recalls Blofeld's in *Thunderball*); it is simply that Mr Gardner

cannot command that compelling readability noted by Lyttelton in 1957 and yielded to by many millions since. The flogging of Operation Meltdown is stolidly achieved; the separate fate reserved for Dr Murik has none of the satisfying ghastliness attending the demises of Dr No and Mr Big.

The trouble is that to resurrect Bond you have to be Fleming, for he was his creator in a way that Tarzan or Sherlock Holmes or Billy Bunter clearly weren't theirs. It was Fleming who smoked seventy cigarettes a day, wore dark blue St John's Island cotton shirts and loved scrambled eggs and double portions of orange juice for breakfast; Bond was a kind of *doppelgänger* sent out to enact what Fleming himself had never achieved (this relation is convincingly analysed in John Pearson's masterly *Life of Ian Fleming*). The ease with which Bond appeared (Fleming, forty-three, never having written a novel before, sat down and wrote *Casino Royale* in eight weeks) suggests the tapping of deep imaginative springs. And the novels that succeeded them drew on the same dark source: "the next volume of my autobiography".

The obvious reason for this is that Mr Gardner is not as good a writer as Fleming. It is not so much the small intricacies ("ravage" for ravish, "a fine patina of flour") or the slightly larger clichés ("Bond is far from not been able to savour the views or delight in the beetles of Scotland"), nor even the occasional echo (Murik's ultimatum to the world recalls Blofeld's in *Thunderball*); it is simply that Mr Gardner

cannot command that compelling readability noted by Lyttelton in 1957 and yielded to by many millions since. The flogging of Operation Meltdown is stolidly achieved; the separate fate reserved for Dr Murik has none of the satisfying ghastliness attending the demises of Dr No and Mr Big.

The trouble is that to resurrect Bond you have to be Fleming, for he was his creator in a way that Tarzan or Sherlock Holmes or Billy Bunter clearly weren't theirs. It was Fleming who smoked seventy cigarettes a day, wore dark blue St John's Island cotton shirts and loved scrambled eggs and double portions of orange juice for breakfast; Bond was a kind of *doppelgänger* sent out to enact what Fleming himself had never achieved (this relation is convincingly analysed in John Pearson's masterly *Life of Ian Fleming*). The ease with which Bond appeared (Fleming, forty-three, never having written a novel before, sat down and wrote *Casino Royale* in eight weeks) suggests the tapping of deep imaginative springs. And the novels that succeeded them drew on the same dark source: "the next volume of my autobiography".

The obvious reason for this is that Mr Gardner is not as good a writer as Fleming. It is not so much the small intricacies ("ravage" for ravish, "a fine patina of flour") or the slightly larger clichés ("Bond is far from not been able to savour the views or delight in the beetles of Scotland"), nor even the occasional echo (Murik's ultimatum to the world recalls Blofeld's in *Thunderball*); it is simply that Mr Gardner

cannot command that compelling readability noted by Lyttelton in 1957 and yielded to by many millions since. The flogging of Operation Meltdown is stolidly achieved; the separate fate reserved for Dr Murik has none of the satisfying ghastliness attending the demises of Dr No and Mr Big.

he would call the book currently in progress, masking his personal involvement by mocking it. Of course the springs were not inexhaustible; by *Thunderball* (1961) Fleming admitted he had "run out of puff", and his last five books are not as good as his first seven. But since they were instinct with a personality much more complex, much more intelligent, much more imaginative than Bond's — the personality, in short, of Fleming himself — they remain alive in a way that *Colonel Sun* and now *Licence Renewed* cannot hope to do.

Why then persist in trying to raise book-Bond from the dead, if such efforts can never succeed? The prospect, no doubt, of making money for somebody; perhaps — the ultimate grisly irony — the necessity of providing new vehicles for film-Bond. But one would like to think that there is also an element of homage, and a faint hoping-beyond-hope that one day the society will really work, and we shall be rewarded with another unmistakable instalment of the latest — perhaps the last — of the Byronic heroes.

© Philip Larkin 1981

## PENGUINS

### The Perfect Crime Selection

Twenty-five years and three adventures on  
- Tom Ripley returns!  
**THE BOY WHO FOLLOWED RIPLEY**  
PATRICIA HIGHSMITH  
'The Ripley Books are marvellously, insanely readable'  
— H.R.F. Keating in *The Times*  
£1.50

The bestselling tribute to the world's greatest sleuth  
**THE PENGUIN COMPLETE SHERLOCK HOLMES**  
SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE  
Four novels and fifty-six short stories in which the master of  
detection and his stalwart gentleman companion grapple with  
the very extremes of treachery and evil. £2.95

**PETER LOVESEY**  
The indomitable Sergeant Cribb and the forever put-upon  
Constable Thackeray on top form in two magnificent  
period pieces.  
**ABRACADABRA £1.25**  
**MAD HATTER'S HOLIDAY £1.25**

**THE AMPERSAND PAPERS**  
MICHAEL INNES  
'An utter delight' — *The New York Times Book Review*  
A gripping entanglement of bitter family enmity, malevolent  
motives, concealed rooms and equally concealed plots. £1.25

'A Victorian murder mystery as satisfying as one of Mrs  
Becton's cakes' — *Guardian*  
**THE BLACKHEATH POISONINGS**  
JULIAN SYMONS  
'His best crime story' — *Observer* £1.25

Patricia Highsmith... P.D. James... Dick Francis  
...and many more  
**VERDICT OF THIRTEEN**  
A Detection Club Anthology  
Edited by JULIAN SYMONS  
Gems of baffling suspense which span the whole field of crime  
fiction from thirteen great masters of the genre. £1.50

An ingenious web of suspicion and murder woven into the  
mists and cliffs of Exmoor.  
**THE EMPTY HOUSE**  
MICHAEL GILBERT  
'This is Michael Gilbert at his best'  
— *The Times Literary Supplement* £1.10



T. J. Blayton



# The professionals and the predatory pikes

By Michael Gilbert

**ERIC AMBLER:**  
The Care of Time  
250pp. Weidenfeld. £6.50.  
0 297 77695 9

In his History of Crime Writing, *Bloody Murder*, Julian Symons refers to Eric Ambler in terms which emphasize his significance in the development of one special branch of crime fiction, the spy story. He uses expressions such as "The values put forward by the spy story up to the advent of Eric Ambler" and "for all spy writers before Ambler". In other words he regards Eric Ambler as an innovator, and rightly so. The difficulty, as each well-planned, well-written novel appears, is to identify exactly where the innovations are taking him.

In the stories which Ambler wrote before *The War* (difficult to realize, as we use those words, that we are speaking of a time nearly fifty years ago) the position is easy to appreciate. Symons sums it up aptly: "The central character is an innocent figure mixed up in violent events, who slowly comes to realize that the agents and spies working on both sides are for the most part unpleasant and not important men." In truth Ambler is "turning Sapper and Buchan upside down". He has produced the first anti-hero. Up to that point the man in charge knew that what he was doing was worthwhile ("It is no exaggeration to say, Carruthers, that the fate of the Western world may depend on your pulling this off") and the readers knew that Carruthers would pull it off, and would save the Western world. With Ambler these certainties vanished. The hero is no longer a superhero. He is the man in the train to London Bridge who travels up with other commuters to a respectable job; but happens for once, to have been sent abroad by his firm, out of comfortable England to parts of Europe where passports and visas take the place of season tickets and the police do not spend the whole of their time helping old ladies across the road. He gets back to England in the end; but one feels sure that he promises himself, as he sinks into the armchair in his house at Sevenoaks and his wife brings him his first pre-dinner gin, that he will never willingly cross the channel again.

This view of people and their reactions to dramatic events did not survive into a post-war world. Symons is

dismissive of the later Ambler novels as "plain thrillers", and certainly the two or three books which followed the end of the War are thrillers. *Passage of Arms* and *The Night-Come* are set in the Far East of a crumbling Dutch East Indies and a resurgent Malaya. They are full of the sort of shrewd comments that a man makes when he is able to take a longer and more analytical view of life. "You can be deceived about loving", says the hero, "but not so easily about liking". And his view of the political situation might have been put by Ernest Bramah into the mouth of Kai Lung.

With a determined trouble-maker, a knife in the back would be the only safe solution. With a more self-interested man, however, a well-paid civil appointment might be the best answer. If, besides purchasing his loyalty, you could also expect to gain his service as an informer, an even more lucrative post could be awarded.

Thrillers, then, if you like, but "plain" thrillers only in the most complimentary sense of the word. I have a feeling that in this next series of books, down to and including *The Light of Day*, Ambler was working himself out of this stilt as a writer of film scripts and back to his first love. One can picture him, at about the time when he wrote *The Lover*, a book which seems to mark a second change of gear, looking around the world almost in despair at the difficulty of fitting it into the framework of the crime novel. It was a world in which machines had outstripped men; a world in which an eavesdropper no longer crouched at the keyhole but switched on his long-range pick-up; a world in which the telephone lens was more important than the human eye and the computer had started to take over from the human brain. One difficulty was that, as soon as the novelty had worn off, it was easier to be dull about these sophisticated devices than it was about their human predecessors. A chapter or two of the modern CIA school demonstrates this truth almost to the point of nausea.

*Bloody Murder* appeared in 1972, which is almost the exact moment that Ambler's work moved forward into the new, and possibly not even yet final, zone. Just as painters are described as having blue periods and green periods, so might this be described as Ambler's Swiss period. Not because his books all

centre around Switzerland, where he now lives, although some do, but because all of them demonstrate a conclusion that the world is a single body. The brain may still be influenced by the heavy forces of nationalism or the drive of private ambition, but the muscles and the nerves which guide the limbs are financial, and the liquid which flows down the arteries and veins is dark red gold.

In Eric Ambler's latest book, *The Care of Time*, a further element is added, an extra ganglion in the body politic: the universality of terror.

What we have to face now, as the second great terrorist wave starts to break, is a threat to our civilization of a wholly different kind, and on a wholly different scale from anything we have experienced before.

Organized terrorism is represented by Mukhabarat Zentrum; organized finance by Syncom-Sentinel, while between them moves that typical Ambler figure, the middleman, the fixer. He is called Brocket or Hecht, or more usually Zander, all synonyms for the predatory pike. He is a high level go-between, a slush fund manager with a multi-million dollar business run out of three brief cases and permanent luxury hotel suites in all major capitals.

For a work in this field, the plot is comparatively simple. Zander is trying to arrange a military base for the Americans in the territory in the Gulf of "the Ruler" - tactfully never identified - in exchange for the sort of

immunity for himself and his family which is normally offered to defectors. A new name, a new identity, a new passport. The Ruler, a manic-depressive paranoid, will only meet the Nato representatives in a health clinic-cum-fall-out shelter in Southern Austria. The meeting is certain to be complicated by the presence of Mukhabarat Zentrum, led by the unpleasant French Algerian, Raoul Bourger, who had killed four officers of Gendarmarie before he reached his sixteenth birthday.

The story is told in the first person by Robert Halliday, an American ghost-writer. He is brought in by Zander to provide, as a cover story for the meeting, a television interview with the Ruler. It is a tribute to Ambler's expertise that he makes all this sound horribly plausible. The characters, Zander and the Ruler in particular, are a great deal more than prototypes. The book is full of those felicities which mark all Ambler's work: "The leader's sarcasms which are the characteristic first stages of a French loss of temper"; or "Among the tycoons I have known the unprinting of disputes between rival subordinates has always been regarded as good healthy fun"; or, better still, "On a day of battle it is best to talk only nonsense".

Graham Greene has called Ambler "our greatest thriller writer". It is an assessment that few would challenge. All one asks when reading his latest book is, where does it stand in the great

roll of thrillers he has been producing for the last fifty years? Does it rank at the top, with *The Mask of Dimitrios*, *The Night-Come* and *The Lover*? In my view, not quite.

It has a superb opening sentence: "The warning message arrived on Monday, the bomb itself on Wednesday; it became a busy week." And the first meeting between Halliday and Zander, in Northern Italy. The book, too, is an explosion of violence at the end of a long and carefully laid tale. The reader with a good memory will taken right back to *Journey Into Fear*.

It is the centre portion which is a trouble. To put the matter in a nutshell, it takes a little too long to get from Northern Italy to Southern Austria. The descriptions of the different hotels, some with too much detail, some with none at all, the episode by the way, the dishonest racket run by the Austrian traffic police, would all be interesting and diverting in a book of travel. In a thriller they are diverting a different sense. They divert the reader from the main line of the plot. The untidiness of time, place and plot are as important in a thriller as they were in classical drama.

There is one other particular in which this book differs from almost all that have gone before. It is a simple-minded amateur. He is a hardened, experienced and resourceful professional. It makes a change.

## Deadly details

By Francis Wyndham

**RUTH RENDELL:**  
Put on by Cuning  
208pp. Hutchinson. £5.95.  
0 09 144120 X

With twenty-two books written over eighteen years, Ruth Rendell has established a double eminence in two separate categories of crime fiction: the classic puzzle, with a stable background and a recurring cast headed by a mildly eccentric detective and his more conventional subordinate; and the novel of pure suspense, in which a blundering innocent and a haunted psychopath become fatally entangled in a paranoid atmosphere of cross purposes and sinister coincidences. In both fields success is difficult, but for opposite reasons: the first has been so thoroughly mined, by a brilliant team stretching from Agatha Christie to P. D. James, that its resources are in danger of being exhausted; and the second, pioneered by the lone figure of Patricia Highsmith, is all the more daunting because comparatively unexplored. Combining a masterly grasp of plot construction with a highly-developed facility for social observation, Ruth Rendell's remarkable talent has been able to accommodate the rigid rules of the reassuring mystery story (where a superficial logic conceals a basic fantasy) as well as the wider range of the disturbing psychological thriller (where an appearance of nightmare overlays a scrupulous realism).

Before considering her latest book, which belongs to the first category, I would like to remind readers and inform new readers of some of her achievements. In the second, *The Pigeon* (1974), a penniless young man in a filthy cage near Stopping Forest is seduced by an "enigmatic beauty, a visit abroad to his dying mother and French writer, a painful, at the thought of a girl, a girl in a room, a pervasive atmosphere of impending disaster but the knowledge of the past direction from which it will come. *A Darker Shade of Blue* (1976), Kenbourne Vale, London, 1915 - Ruth Rendell's first

microcosm of metropolitan menace conveyed with unerring accuracy; the perversity who periodically strangles a tailor's dummy in the cellar until this safety valve is appropriated for a Guy Fawkes bonfire; the lover whose mail is intercepted by the perversity, at first by accident and then by design. This tampering with vital correspondence, like the image of the locked-in dog, is almost - but of course not quite - too painful to read about. *A Judgement in Stone* (1977): Ruth Rendell's most daring balancing-act, in which she gives away the whole plot in the opening sentence and throughout the narrative keeps on reminding her readers of its outcome while somehow or other increasing the tension by this means. *Make Death Love Me* (1979): the hen-pecked bank manager, the clumsy kidnapping, the unexpected idyll, irony piled on irony in a circular pattern like a snake stinging its own tail. *The Lake of Darkness* (1980): instead of imaginary W15, a vivid evocation of the vicinity of Parliament Hill Fields and Gospel Oak; a philanthropic impulse is undermined by a hidden ambivalence; an intrigue of labyrinthine complexity in which every element is mockingly duplicated by its opposite.

*Put on by Cuning* continues the chronicles of Kingsmarkham, that murder-prone Sussex village protected by Chief Inspector Wexford and Inspector Burden, as neatly paired a couple in their way as the two Romneys. When first met in 1964 (*From Doon With Death*) Wexford was fifty-two years old, "thickset without being fat"; six years later (*A Gully Thing Surprised*) he "looked more mountainous than ever"; by 1972 (*Murder Being Once Done*) a thrombosis had been diagnosed; and in 1979 (*Means Of Evil*) he is described as "a tall, ungainly, rather ugly man who had once been fat to the point of obesity but had slimmed to gauntness for reasons of health". He has a rather irritating addiction to literary quotations (often reflected in his croakings; oddly unmemorable) which he exchanges competitively with his nephew, Detective Superintendent Howard Fortune of the Kenbourne Vale CID, but which tend to go over Burden's head. He is happily married to his understanding Rose, although in 1975 (*Ysake*

*Hands For Ever*) he only just resisted infidelity with the lovely sensual Nancy Lake. His daughter Sylvia is married with no sons; in 1978 (*A Steeping Life*) she briefly left her husband as a (semi-) protest, but soon returned. The younger daughter, his favourite, Sheila Wexford of the Royal Spicery Company, who has played Jessica at the National, and starred in a revival of Maugham's *The Letter*, and is now a household name after appearing for five years as Stewardess Currie, the most beautiful of the air hostesses in the national TV serial *Runway*.

Twenty years younger than its chief, Burden is prim, handsome, a natty dresser. After his second wife Jean died in 1971 (*No More Days Than*) and he was left to bring up John and Pat alone, everyone thought he would marry Jean's sister Grace; instead, he had a passionate affair with an equivocal and named Gemma Lawrence. This experience left him a little less trusting before; and since his second marriage, to Jenny Ingham, whose brother Amys works for the publishing firm of Carlton Brent & Co. is slightly less of a philistine. There are even signs in *Put on by Cuning* that he may one day be able to match some of Wexford's more accessible literary references. Other developments of a domestic nature revealed in the new novel include Sheila's wedding to a rich young businessman named Andrew Thorpe, and Doris's decorous romance with a former admirer, Rex Newnes.

Why does one dwell so obsessively on these trivial marginalia which have nothing to do with the substance of Ruth Rendell's work? Partly because to reveal only a small part of the fun of potential readers who inadvertently deluding a single (in thrillers all material is a myth and any comment can be a myth) and partly because obsessive dwelling on trivial marginalia is an indulgence in the book itself, there is little more to say than that the scene shifts to Kenbourne Vale and to the South of France; that the plot is as elaborate as usual; and that the author's foreign-born writer, known to the minor way, these

**JOHN DICKSON CARR:**  
The Door to Doom  
352pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
0 241 10535 8

The detective novels and stories of John Dickson Carr (1906-77) have received the highest praise without ever becoming either a popular success or a highbrow fad. He is the acknowledged master of that classic art, the tale of detection in which detection is seen to take place, the reader, and crimes of majestic and multifarious impossibility are shown at last to have been possible after all, if not always very plausible. His villains sometimes get, and (less excusably) are revealed as having banked on, more than their fair share of luck, but he never assists them by coincidence, obscurity or any kind of deus.

So much is evidently not enough for some. There are those like Julian Symons who give Carr full credit for inventiveness and professionalism but find in him an excessive reliance on formula and a lack of human warmth amounting to an absence of characterization. Not a few would go further and charge him with disastrous facetiousness on occasion, instancing *The Blind Barber* as a fair idea exemplarily ruined by the notion that drink, anything to do with drink, is funny. Again, at every emotional turn he is likely to plunge into the style of the novelette.

Carr's admirers would not argue with these objections, which for them do not diminish the brilliance of the puzzles or the smouldering menace behind them. What some see as adherence to a prescription appears to others as the following of a ritual or a recurring dream: the approach and escape of the murder scene by way of bolted doors and barred shutters, across an expanse of smooth sand or wetpaved snow, most typically through a well-lighted place watched by several alert and truthful witnesses who saw nothing. And of course there are no secret passages, hidden trapdoors or concealed compartments any more than there are twin brothers or poisons unknown to police. Spenser or later the reader protests, "But nobody could have done it".

Impossible crimes were the stock-in-trade of Chesterton in the Father Brown stories. Bodies vanished and living men were snatched up into the air (all appearances) by magic. Only Father Brown saw the truth, the overlooked possibility - but so often it could not have been seen, or would not have been overlooked, or was not a possibility. In that marvellous and much-echoed story "The Invisible Man", for instance, one or more of the four sentinels would have been sure to mention the unsuspicious intruder. It was Carr's great stroke to make good such perceptible gaps, to devise the contraptions that created an apparently perfect illusion of miracle and still held one tiny out-of-sight weak spot which enabled the detective finally to demolish the whole elaborate conceit. That detective was as likely as not to be the scholarly Dr. Gideon Fell, a jovial caricature of G.K. in the flesh, unworried, shrewd and devoted to beer.

If Carr owes something to Chesterton, he owes about as much to the kind of stories that began to be written in the 1920s by Agatha Christie and others: those set in the village and country towns and grand houses of southern England. Coming from the USA to live here in 1933, he made his own characteristic contribution to this sub-genre, laying out the neo-Gothic edifices among the manorhouses and tennis-courts. He soon developed a feeling for the "local" life - sometimes depicted grandly, and his ear for English turns of phrase, though his native tongue is unsurpassed by any other foreign-born writer, known to the minor way, these

novels supply some sympathetic insight into the social history of that vanished era.

Carr had already settled on his speciality - the locked-room problem - but not much else; his earlier novels (1930-2) are melodramatic in style, have harrowing bits in them and feature a tiresomely flamboyant French detective, Henri Benoulin. As soon as Carr had produced Dr Fell (*Hag's Nook*, 1933) he was in full control. He wrote so fast thereafter that in the following year, presumably to evade charges of over-production, he began publishing under a pseudonym, Carter Dickson, as well as his own name. The Dickson novels naturally display a different kind of detective, the eccentric Sir Henry Merrivale, Bt, who seems to many readers as tiresome as Benoulin in his way, and also out of drawing. H.M. is a member of the English aristocracy, whom even English people find it hard to understand, and keeps saying things like "Burn me!" and "Lor love a duck!" and referring to the Lord Chief Justice as "Boko".

In the dozen years of his heyday Carr/Dickson turned out over thirty novels and some twenty shorter tales of an ingenuity altogether his own. One thinks of *He Wouldn't Kill Patience* (Dickson), in which a perfect ordinary room is sealed on the inside from the outside. *The Judas Window* (Dickson), with its calm announcement that there is such a homicide-facilitating aperture in most rooms (though my experiments indicate that the window, easy enough to open with a screwdriver and a knitting needle, can only be closed after entering by the door); *The Black Spectacles* (Carr), the most accomplished fusing of the far-fetched and the domestic, unless *The Crooked Hinge* (Carr) is that in a different way. There for once the master's mind can be glimpsed at the moment of inspiration, the foundation-stone of the whole intricate structure identified in the quotation from the opening of the first Father Brown story, "The Blue Cross", that Carr uses as the epigraph to his final section:

"There was one thing which Flambeau, with all his dexterity of disguise, could not cover, and that was his singular height..."

Carr's murderer can lose six inches in a few minutes, and his method is quite simple, indeed obvious once you have thought of it, only you never would have thought of it - the mark of all the author's best inventions. (The trick of height-variation, by the way, is not performable by more than a small minority of persons; and requires certain apparatus, though this would be on open sale. It is not any form of stilt.)

*The Burning Court* (Carr, 1937) is many people's favourite and also extraordinary. Yes, but the detective, a non-recurring character, is commonplace; true, the structure demands that he should be commonplace, but I still miss Dr Fell. That apart, the enterprise is of irreproachable quality. As a series of crimes

**HELEN HOKE:**  
Sinister, Strange and Supernatural  
160pp. J. M. Dent. £3.95.  
0 460 06072 4

Helen Hoke's anthology of ten stories, *Sinister, Strange and Supernatural*, is a large, predictable and undulating collection, with the exception of Jack Finney's "Contents of the Dead Man's Pocket", not a ghost story at all but a gripping account of an experience so vivid in its anticipation of imminent death that life can never seem quite the same again. Unforgettable, though, is to be read by sufferers from vertigo. Elsewhere there is a cheerful haunted house story "The Pipe Smoker", an unexpected place that reminded me of Walter de la Mare. Perhaps Helen Hoke will manage to include him in her next collection.

## The art of the impossible

By Kingsley Amis

There can be few kinds of writing that look colder in print (apart from the test of a rock musical, possibly) than a radio play. A writer like Carr, heavily concerned with situation, setting, physical and other detail, clues and so on is at an added disadvantage, and his characters here do tend to lead off by standing toe to toe gabbling instant information at each other. Nevertheless, these half-dozen scripts from 1942-3 are full of cunning bits and what read very much like passages conceived for radio rather than translated from the page.

The best is a brilliant variation on the familiar Paris Exposition story, about the old girl who develops a bubonic plague there and is spirited away so thoroughly that, when the daughter returns to their hotel, there is no trace of her. An account of this is hauled into Carr's first scene, but with thirty minutes for everything, what would you?

This volume also contains a couple of unsuccessful but readable attempts to combine deductive and macabre elements, an entertaining account of English highwaymen from Isaac Atkinson to Dick Turpin, an essay

By 1948 Carr, never progressive in his outlook, had ceased to like it here and he and his English wife took off for the States. They were back in 1951 after the Tory victory at the election, but things were never to be the same for him again. There may or may not be a link between the traditional detective story and the pre-war world, but there can be no doubt that, after the final departure of that world, Carr showed a loss of energy and imagination in the Dr Fell and H.M. tales and others with contemporary settings. Nor can it have been a matter of whim that between 1950 and 1972, the year of his last novel, he spent half his time writing historical romances. These have crimes and clues and deductions and many clever moves, but not one is any substitute for, say, *Murder in the Submarine Zone*. To put matters more simply, Carr said about 1955 that he had developed a taste for solutions to the locked-room problem. Well, the eighty-fourth and eighty-fifth were not going to be as easy to come by as the fourth and fifth. Like his colleagues, like the science-fiction writers of almost the same period, he was coming to the end of his material.

*The Door to Doom*, though legitimately called that after a - terrible - story included in the volume, should without doubt have been called something else. It consists of uncollected material, most of it from earlier years. There are four Benoulin stories, the first of which demonstrates most expertly and precariously most expertly and precariously how to get out of a locked room unseen by a dozen close-room witnesses. The last is a barefaced piece of licit misdirection about a murder on a train, rather thrown away in so few pages. Taken together, these four show in their style and presentation the formidable speed with which their twenty-one-year-old author was developing.

side her illegitimate baby, John Edgell's M. R. Jamesian denouement materializes out of an ancestral volume, Algernon Blackwood's ghost who doesn't realize he's been killed in an accident and Fritz Leiber's neat if conventional psychological ghost story about a paranoid obsessed by the spell cast by an interior decorator. There is a characteristically nasty piece by Lovecraft, *Cool Air*, which crosses Machen's "Novel of the White Powder" with Poe's even nastier "Strange Case of Mr. Valdemar", and an odd science-fiction story by Ray Bradbury about the novelist Tom Wolfe, which doesn't seem to belong here at all. Last of all comes Martin Armstrong's "The Pipe Smoker", an unexpected place that reminded me of Walter de la Mare. Perhaps Helen Hoke will manage to include him in her next collection.

Julian Briggs

### ELLIS PETERS

Author of the famous Brother Cadfael Chronicles

Winner of the CWA Silver Dagger 1980, with *Monk's Hood*  
"must surely become a cult figure of crime fiction... she deserves the sort of devotion following which has been reserved for Sherlock Holmes." - *Financial Times*

### Saint Peter's Fair

May, £5.50

### COLIN DEXTER

Winner of the CWA Silver Dagger 1979, with *Service of All The Dead*  
"a tale as tortuous, richly textured and suspenseful as any devised by the masters." - *The Guardian*

### The Dead of Jericho

June, £5.95

### JOHN WAINWRIGHT

"Knows how to drop surprises like bombs... first rate." - *Manchester Evening News*

### All on a Summer's Day

June, £5.95

### A. J. QUINNELL

"imaginative violence... rich in the virtues of the suspense novel." - *New York Times*

### Man on Fire

March, £5.95

### SARA WOODS

"So good... Sara Woods is unfailingly inventive." - *Financial Times*

### Cry Guilty

April, £5.50

### MICHAEL UNDERWOOD

"Couldn't write a bad book if he tried." - *Oxford Mail*

### Double Jeopardy

May, £5.50

### THE FLOATING ADMIRAL

Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, G. K. Chesterton and certain other members of the elite Detection Club came together in 1933 each to write a chapter of this mystery, knowing what had gone before, but totally ignorant of the solution...

### WINTER'S CRIMES 13

A brilliant collection of new stories by leading crime writers

November, £5.50

### MACMILLAN LONDON

Collins

**CRIME WRITERS ASSOCIATION AWARDS**

THE GOLD DAGGER

to

**H.R.F. KEATING\***

for THE MURDER OF THE MAHARAJAH £5.95

THE JOHN CREASEY MEMORIAL AWARD

for the best first novel to

**LIZA CODY**

for DUPE £5.95

SPECIAL SILVER DAGGER AWARD

for continued excellence over 50 outstanding crime novels to

**ELIZABETH FERRARS**

\*The new H.R.F. Keating is GO WEST, INSPECTOR GHOTE £5.95

COLLINS CRIME CLUB guarantees a good read

Collins















## CHATTO &amp; WINDUS

## Mary Hocking

March House

The arrival of a mysterious psychiatrist at the March House clinic heralds the collapse of Ruth's entire world.

0 7011 2586 1 224pp  
August £6.95

## Eric Shanes

Turner's Rivers, Harbours and Coasts

A companion volume to the award-winning *Turner's Picturesque Views in England and Wales* presenting Turner's paintings from a variety of watercolour series of inland and coastal waters, many reproduced in colour for the first time.

0 7011 2569 1 160pp  
including 96 colour plates and 17 black and white illustrations  
July £15

## Peter Howe

Origins

A highly original first collection of poems centred on a sequence of sonnets inspired by events of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

0 7011 2573 X 48pp  
July £3.50 PLP

## Virginia Woolf

Perhaps the greatest gift which Virginia Woolf possessed was the gift of stimulation. Everything she touches shines with fresh iridescence.

Nigel Nicolson

The Hogarth Press are pleased to announce the reissue, in June, of three volumes of her essays.

## The Moment

0 7012 0271 8 192pp  
£7.50

## The Death of The Moth

0 7012 0457 5 160pp  
£6.95

## The Captain's Death Bed

0 7012 0456 7 224pp  
£7.95

THE HOGARTH PRESS

## commentary

## Tolstoy in translation

By Christopher Wintle

Anna Karenina  
London Coliseum

In a lecture given some years ago, Sir Michael Tippett described the advice he once offered to a young composer. If you are going to set an opera beside a river, he had warned, be sure not to forget the example of Wagner's *Ring*. The river must either be bigger and better than the Rhine, or its status must be quite different. On no account must it be seen to compete at the same stakes and lose. Something of Tippett's advice might have been offered to Ian Hamilton before he embarked upon *Anna Karenina*, for his own introductory words tell all: "the subject... or at least one aspect of it, would surely have appealed to Verdi, Puccini or Massenet". Whether the point is true or not (and Tchaikovsky after all referred to Tolstoy's epic as "aristocratic babbling"), what he offers is a kind of stylistic reclamation, and one that engages rather less both dramatically and musically than some of its nineteenth-century precursors.

Of course, to derive an opera libretto from so comprehensive a novel is in itself an unenviable task. Hamilton quite reasonably concentrates upon the triangular relationship of Anna, Vronsky and Karenin, considerably subordinating the roles of the other characters. Levin, however, he entirely excludes, on the grounds of his not being "translatable adequately into dramatic terms". This, as it turns out, is a problematical exclusion, for not only is the counter-balancing relationship with Kitty lost, but, in effect, the book's thought is removed in order to highlight its fiction, with few new kinds of dramatic correlates offered for the novel's social and cultural commentaries. As a consequence, Russian society is largely sentimentalized, in the tradition of BBC serialized classics. The off-stage chorus sings wordlessly as the ladies recline beneath white parasols in the gardens of their dachas; the peasants are inseparable from their

besoms; and the aristocrats spend an interminable time dancing waltzes and quadrilles as they display yet more changes of costume. Verdi, one cannot help thinking, would not have let the matter go at quite that.

But all this could easily be overlooked if the music itself didn't display something of the same dull conventionality. Much has been made by the composer of his return to tonality and traditional key-associations in this work. Tonality may indeed be far from dead, but there are alternative ways of reviving it: either by breathing quite new life into it, as Messiaen has done with his *A major* music in the relatively recent *Des Canyons aux Etoiles*; or by resuscitating it with the full trappings of a dated musical idiom. It is the second of these courses that Hamilton longs to adopt, and indeed at moments does adopt, never more brazenly so than in the second act trio for Stiva, Vronsky and Karenin. But the effect is merely to reduce the musical score to the level of a period prop, rather than to invest it with something more vital and fresh.

Elsewhere, Hamilton's style prefers understatement, and indeed dramatic underarticulation. The music unfolds as a sustained lyrical arsis, lightly supported by a very conventionally deployed orchestra with few memorable textures (the scene with the clairvoyant Landau marks only a beginning in this direction). As a consequence, the quality of sustained obsessive energy that characterized so much turn-of-the-century opera is absent, leaving the feeling that nothing very urgent has taken place. Even Anna's principal theme sounds like a pale reflection of the Sehnsucht motif from *Tristan*.

Nevertheless, the score does have a certain sensitivity and integrity, and passages such as Anna's soliloquy in Act 2, or the duet for Dolly and Anna in Act 3, are genuinely touching. On the whole, sets and costumes are better than the singing, where far too few words are audible (Della Jones was the notable exception here). Howard Williams as the conductor shows himself highly dependable.

## Making it new

By Paul Driver

Granger's Complete British Folk-Song Settings and Finnissy's Piano Concerto No. 6  
British Music Information Centre, Stratford Place

The centenary of Percy Grainger's birth falls next year and the opportunity for re-appraisal of the composer's music and his significance in a wider cultural context cannot come a moment too soon. His name is familiar to many listeners but his image is almost entirely that of an English eccentric, ally of the most parochial English musical traditions, a jolly and innocent man. In fact he was an Australian with a brilliant and original mind who, rather in the manner of Ezra Pound, "resembled" in many ways the "European" determined to shake its traditions to their foundations, to free English music from its German domination and to achieve in the end a completely "Free Music".

He was a revolutionary who not only anticipated most of the technical innovations of the musical Modernist movement, but also proposed contexts in which they could properly co-exist: irregularity of rhythm, non-developmental forms, harmonic experiment reaching beyond polytonality, radical novelty of scoring, elaborate conceptions, early music, jazz, and proto-electronic musical machines were all explored by Grainger, and

always with a view to the most thorough emancipation of musical language. "It seems to me absurd," he wrote.

to live in an age of flying and yet not to be able to execute tonal glides and curves... Out in nature we hear all kinds of lovely and touching 'free' (non-harmonic) combinations of tones yet we are unable to take up these beauties and expressiveness into the art of music because of our archaic notions of harmony.

"To break the pentameter, that was the first heaven" - Pound's famous declaration applies in its way to Grainger; he played a similar part in establishing a "free verse" of music. The similarities run further into the darker side of the composer. Though outwardly gentle and honourable, he constantly wrote in letters about the fascinations of war, of incest and of "blue-eyed" racial perfection. These letters are a remarkable kind of Nietzschean moral probing, with terrible self-insight. They ought to be collected.

On Friday May 22, Michael Finnissy enabled a small audience at the British Music Information Centre to focus a little better on the "modernist" aspect of Grainger. He gave the first performance of his complete settings for piano, coupled with the first performance of his own Piano Concerto number 6 (which is for piano solo). Finnissy is an English composer who came to prominence in avant-garde circles in Europe some years ago but whose music seems to retain a unique power to attract listeners in this

country. The concerto was typical enough of the ferocity and notational complexity of his style, but typical also of its peculiar quietness and linear, lyrical qualities that may be seen as resulting from a Graingeresque absorption of folk-music. In a number of his works the folk-element is explicit; for instance, the piano marathon *English Country-Tunes* of 1977. And he has written a piano piece (a beautiful study in trills) that is actually entitled *Granger*.

Listening to it, one felt that Finnissy knew the other composer's intentions infallibly - knew how to bring out the point or the manic athleticism behind the tuneful foreground of the folk-music settings; knew how to make even the three of these seventeen pieces that are mere epigrams speak with a disproportionate weight of emotion and suggest reasons why Grainger never seemed to attempt conventionally large-scale compositions. He played in the spirit of Grainger, the concert pianist too, using the fastest tempos and not being afraid of wrong notes where they may profitably be played. The performance drew one into an apparently familiar pastoral world only to be startled and disconcerted there; it demonstrated some new emotions in English music.

A recent issue of the *Journal of American Studies* (Volume 14, No 3) contains David Sanbly's essay "The Public Eye of Raymond Chandler" and John S. Whitley's "Striving Things Up: Dashiell Hammett's 'Confidential' Op". Subscription details are available from Cambridge University Press, PO Box 110, Cambridge CB3 9RL.



"An oriental in a long maroon robe" (recto), and "An oriental in a blue robe" (verso): two pencil and watercolour works by Gérard, in a sale of old master and nineteenth century drawings and watercolours at Christie's, New York, on Tuesday June 9.

## I am a camera

By Richard Combs

Death Watch  
Paris Pullman

*Death Watch* is a vision of the future that comes out all fuzzy because it is unsure what to make of its locations in the present. The director, Bertrand Tavernier, is better known for films like *The Watchmaker of Saint-Paul* and *Une semaine de vacances*, in which he seemed the new exponent (or perhaps just a one-man revival) of French humanist cinema. And that is partly the problem with *Death Watch*. Tavernier consistently tries to stay close to his characters as people, without realizing that this kind of science fiction needs a boldness of stylization, and certainly a greater sense of urgency than he has given it. He has also chosen

to set the film in Scotland, principally Glasgow, thus achieving a kind of double alienation from his usual terrain. Unfortunately, the insight or simple clarity which such distance might bring eludes him.

The death watch is not a local form of wake but a television programme, in this vaguely imminent society, death has not only lost its sting but its meaning. A combination, we are told, of advanced medical science and creeping taboo has swept it out of sight. Dying no longer has any place in life, and so the media has rushed in to fill the gap, to exploit the morbid curiosity of the death-starved audience. Day by day, "Death Watch" will observe someone in the process of dying, a soap opera which ends with the protagonist being written out of the script for keeps. The problem of access, of filming the subject unawares, is solved by another technological innovation. TV employee Roddy (Harvey Keitel) is implanted with equipment which films whatever he sees and transmits it back to the studio. He becomes the camera; a Final Solution to the problems of the fly-on-the-wall documentary technique.

A subject is found, Katherine Hawthorne (Romy Schneider), who is told by her doctor that she is dying of an incurable disease - and never seen in the question what that could mean in the society posited by the film. Hunted by the media to appear on the programme, she is seduced by the prospect of fame, and runs off to the west of Scotland to look for sanctuary with her first husband. That is where Roddy comes in, befriending her and travelling with her, all the while heading back reports on her daily deterioration. Almost wilfully, he keeps the source of light he needs to keep the camera-eyes constantly charged, and blithely ignores the fact that Katherine but in time to time he is the human consolation (a wife he thought lost) into the arms of the biblically suffering Roddy.

There is a certain scale and majesty to these events, in particular, the hero's Faustian pact, and the extravagance of the film's production. But Tavernier denies this dimension in his efforts to embrace the characters. One gets the feeling he doesn't really want to do science fiction, and wishes he could plant it all closer to home. He gets his wish at the end, when the couple arrive at the privileged garden of Katherine's husband (Max Von Sydow), who is not to be worried, philosophical, and out to be warm, philosophical, and out to be warm. The film is a sentimentalist's Frenchman, albeit Swedish. But by dissipating the science fiction premises, and force of his plot, Tavernier turns *Death Watch* into just another white about media manipulation

## commentary

## Gingering up Racine

By John Weightman

Britannicus  
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith

We rarely get the opportunity of seeing Racine done in English. His beautifully structured plays, in their original form, are really spoken operas, whose emotional force, theatrical excitement and psychological truth are carried entirely on the miraculous ebb and flow of the demands, and there is no way of transposing this unique phenomenon into another tongue. Stage business, decor and even acting in the naturalistic sense, count for little; the actors are required to reinforce the exquisite modulations of the verse with formal gestures and rhythmic groupings, so as to allow the fluid triumph of rigid convention that Racine alone, among the dozens of practitioners of French neo-classical tragedy, was somehow able to bring off. But in a foreign tongue, his warm, singing statues are liable to turn into cold, plaster automata, and so directors feel the need to look for ways of gingering him up.

A few years ago, the National Theatre's interesting rhymed version of *Phèdre* by Tony Harrison moved the

action from Ancient Greece to the British Raj; the switch detracted considerably from the classical grandeur of the semi-divine heroine, but at least it gave Diana Rigg the chance of a rich, un-English display of temperance in a sultry setting. For this new *Britannicus*, Christopher Fettes uses John Cairncross's unrhymed translation, which closely follows the literal meaning of the original. But, though keeping all the Roman references, he sets the action in the twentieth century. The audience sits around a stark, brick-lined space resembling an underground bunker in which a neo-Fascist dictator might be temporarily housed. Armed guards prowl menacingly, *musique concrète* clicks and thunders to keep us in a mood of terror, clocks strike ominously, and the metal garage door to Nero's apartments is slammed open or down with fearful impact. The characters, wearing various kinds of formal or informal modern dress, in tone a slightly archaic literary English, which is at variance with their contemporary costumes and gives them at times an eerie, extra-terrestrial quality, as if they were performers in some superior space-serial. In the vital confrontation scene between Agrippina and Nero, mother and son kiss each other passionately on the mouth, presumably to drive home the incestuous, Oedipal aspect of the theme (in the original, of course, there are no kisses at all: in

Racine, no character, not even lovers, can as much as touch each other). To mark the temporary mood of euphoria during the phony lull before the murder, Britannicus performs a solo dance, ecstatically waving a medal that Nero has apparently given him as a token of reconciliation. Nero, after watching the murder at the party, walks in flicking a riding-crop, which he must have found conveniently to hand to symbolize his now unleashed power.

All this is good, theatrical stuff, meant no doubt to *dépasser* Racine, but the effect is to create a hybrid aesthetic object with multiple and conflicting implications. Admittedly, the original Racine is also a hybrid; the characters are seventeenth-century aristocrats disguised as Ancient Romans. But in the French, the hybrid is an artistic fusion; paradoxically, the most sublime moment is Nero's sado-masochistic declaration of his sudden love for June, which is both precious in its vocabulary and utterly realistic in sentiment. The English-speaking Nero does his best with this passage, but he cannot make it sound right, firstly because the words do not, and secondly because his contemporary dress and neo-Fascist setting have already established him as a sinister brute for whom such refinements could have no meaning.

By creating total menace from the start, the performance blurs the essential point that the play is meant to be about the metamorphosis of Nero from an apparently decent ruler into a monster. And, by offering such a mix of effects, it conceals the fact that Racine's special gift is his impeccable purity of line in dramatic development.

But, if we forget about Racine, there is much to enjoy in the performance as a thriller about power and sex. The characters easiest to deal with naturally are, of course, the secondary ones: Burrhus, the gruff soldier, Narcissus the evil plotter and Althina, the naive confidante; these three were beautifully differentiated by Alan McNaughten, Donald Pickering and Valerie Sarrail. Of the principals, the one who most impressed me was Elizabeth Richardson as June; although rigged out in a most unbecoming costume, consisting of a jacket and baggy pants - not at all what one would expect as "le simple appareil" D'une beauté qu'on vient d'arracher au sommeil" - she conveyed a consistent impression of intelligent innocence. Jonathan Kent as Nero, Sebastian McKenna as Agrippina and Garry Cooper as Britannicus all had their moments, although they occasionally seemed to experience difficulty in pacing the long speeches without the help of beat or rhyme.

## Feeling for the Fifties

By D. A. N. Jones

Theatre Workshop Cabaret  
Theatre Royal, Stratford East

How far, we wonder, did Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop succeed in its efforts to create a working-class desire with a left-wing bias? The company put on a cabaret at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, on May 24, which seemed designed to stimulate the feeling we call nostalgia for the brave days of the Fifties. Veterans of the company sat on the stage, drinking and smoking at little tables, stepping forward to do a little song, or a little dance, or a little act. In the audience were drinking and smoking too. In the crowded bar, at the interval and after the show, we sang old songs round the piano - the old songs, hits of World War Two, nothing later than the Fifties. Theatre Workshop has always been devoted to sentiment about the good old days.

The show was composed by Howard Crompton, who has just published a detailed chronicle of the company's history, *The Theatre Workshop Story*, 226pp. Five Methuens, £8.95, 0 413 47610 3. He begins in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was 16. He began in 1939 when Jimmy Miller joined an agitprop company in London and they helped found a street theatre group, called the Red Hagganones, which played before the war. He says outside the Labour Party, Jimmy Miller changed his name to Ewan MacColl. He had left school at fourteen and lacked the normal background and qualifications of an actor, but he was taken up by the BBC in Manchester when he was











van Dine; the University of Wyoming at Cheyenne walks tall with the Nabokovian and dapper Jamesian Ray Russell in its possession. Should it not be a cause for national concern that Michael Gilbert's manuscripts are at the University of California at Berkeley, and those of Julian Symons in the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas? Mecca for future researchers, however, will be Boston, where the Mugar Memorial Library houses the original manuscripts of no less than ten per cent of the writers included in this collection. Here the roar of bulldozers, the clatter of steel erectors can hardly cease from night, as one new depository after another goes up, each one protecting, with the latest resources of modern scientific technology, its precious papers from fire, earthquake, civil commotion, bubonic plague, nuclear holocaust and A. J. Raffles.

But can it actually be the case that the manuscripts of so many authors need to be preserved? We have their printed works. Much as we might love Ngilo Marsh, Elery Queen or Rex Stout, do we really burn with unsummarized desire until we have examined all the textual variants of *Death in Ecstasy* (Mugar Memorial Library), *The Roman Hat Mystery* (Humanities Research Center), or *Too Many Cooks* (University of North Carolina)? Unfortunately, the industry is a self-perpetuating one. Students in search of a subject who study this work will learn that Robert B. Parker (Professor at Northeastern University, Boston) wrote his PhD dissertation on Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett and Ross Macdonald. Should they then, in their turn, contemplate a thesis on this trio's present-day epigones—say Parker himself, Peter Israel and Andrew Bergman—will they be told that a more useful way of spending their time would be to examine the complete text of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* on to a cherry stone?

Certainly Conan Doyle, when he

wrote the first Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet*, in Bush Villa, Southsea and sold it to Ward, Lock & Co for £25, might almost have withheld pen from paper had he known of the eventual consequences. He was amazed that "anyone should spend such pains on such material", as he wrote to Ronald Knox on the appearance of the latter's "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes".

And it is with a vast sense of relief that one turns back for a time to his work, to stories written without any consciousness of predecessors, of the ten commandments the detective story writer must obey, of previous solutions to the locked-room mystery, of already employed little known poisons, of methods of concealing the identity of the murderer, or the victim, or the detective, of the detective as knight errant, of the cleansing ritual of violence—in short, of practically everything with which the contributors to the encyclopedia chiefly engage themselves—to plunge once more into the eternally revivifying, if smokesladen, atmosphere of 221B Baker Street.

This new complete edition of the canon is elegantly produced, and has an elegantly written and thoroughly sensible introduction by Julian Symons. He calls attention, in passing, to a point often missed by commentators: Conan Doyle's almost poetic use of the descriptive detail, sometimes macabre, but not necessarily so—the "horrid red, spongy surface" of the wound when a thumb has been "torn right out from the roots"; or the request, in "The Copper Beeches", for the permanently smiling Mr Rucastle that his new governess (did she become Watson's second wife, or was she happy to remain head of that private school in Walsall?) should cut off her hair and wear a dress in a particular shade of electric blue. There should, however, be an alphabetical index to the stories.

## Boston burnings

By Peter Lewis

GEORGE V. HIGGINS:

*The Rat on Fire*  
183pp. Secker. £5.95.  
0 436 195887

George V. Higgins is not so much an author as a superhuman high-speed word-processor. Since 1972 he has published ten books, a high production rate even by the standards of fertile full-time writers, yet Higgins, once an Assistant District Attorney in Massachusetts, also manages to run his own legal practice and to contribute to professional journals. He made his name with his first novel, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, filmed by Peter Yates as a Robert Mitchum vehicle, and during the 1970s developed a strongly individual mode of fiction characterized by the extensive use of rapid-fire direct speech. On the basis of his first few books, he established a reputation as a highly original and very realistic crime writer—the Hammett or Chandler of the 1970s—and this label tends to stick to him. Yet Higgins played fast and loose with the conventions of the crime novel. He has progressively widened the scope of his novels to take in much of contemporary American urban life, especially politics. In all its squalor, the figure of Edgar in *A Year of So with Edgar* (1979), set mainly in Washington, seems an embodiment of national disillusionment and malaise after the spurious liberal euphoria of the 1960s. Higgins is one of the Watergate Laureates of the 'yucky years', from Nixon through Ford and Carter to Reagan.

Reading a Higgins novel is rather like facing a firing squad armed with like velocity rifles. His characters rattle off their argot-ridden speech, and when one stops another takes over. His new novel, *The Rat on Fire*, opens with direct speech—"I do not need this shit!"—and continues in much the same way throughout, with little authorial narration. Since *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, Higgins has been criticised (by Norman Mailer, among others) for the tape-recorder authenticity of his dialogue, yet this needs to

be qualified. For one thing, "dialogue" is not an accurate description of what often happens in a Higgins novel: "interrupted monologue" seems more appropriate. Once his more articulate characters get into rhetorical stride, the only thing that stops them is the end of a chapter. Higgins is drawing on an indigenous tradition rooted in vaudeville of the fast-talking, wise-cracking, slang monologist, and is one of a line of American vernacular writers to have transformed this oral tradition into literature.

This dialogue is as stylized as Synges's Kiltanor or Congreve's polished wit. Like these two dramatists, Higgins derives his idiom from the speech patterns of a particular society which he then processes to produce a heightened and consciously literary style. It may appear natural but is as artificial (in the non-pejorative sense) as all the other "authentic" idioms devised by writers as different as Hemingway and Pinter. Odd as it may seem of a writer whose favourite words include "fuckin'", "shit", and "asshole", Higgins is very much a stylist—one who elevates the colloquial and the foul-mouthed to the level of abrasive eloquence.

The symbolic-sounding title of Higgins's new book, *The Rat on Fire*, in fact possesses a literal level of meaning, since rats soaked in petrol, ignited, and then allowed to race around a tenement building are the unorthodox means by which the arsonists in the novel carry out their crime. The novel centres on this crime, but is decidedly not a crime novel in the usual sense of the word. There is no element of the whodunit, little suspense, and almost no interest in the process of detection even though three policemen are important characters. From the outset, we, like the police, know what the crime is going to be and who the criminals are; and throughout the novel Higgins keeps us fully informed about the plans of the arsonists and the police surveillance. Given the American legal system, with its marked individualistic bias, the problem the police face is to ensure that they have an absolutely watertight case, something that proves to be virtually impossible until the arson is completed and disaster occurs.

## Soviet sleuths

By Michael Scammell

MARTIN CRUZ SMITH:

*Gorky Park*  
365pp. Collins. £6.95.  
0 00 222278 7

Chief Investigator Arkady Renko of the Moscow militia is called to Gorky Park late one spring night to investigate three dead bodies under the snow. At first it looks like a routine case of three drunks wandering off the path, collapsing and freezing to death, a common enough mishap in the Russian winter. But why does Major Pribluda of the KGB turn up almost simultaneously, and in the process of establishing that the three victims have been murdered destroy some of the evidence? And why have the victims' faces been expertly skinned and their finger joints chopped off to forestall identification?

If anyone can find the answers to questions like these it is the indefatigable Arkady Renko, Moscow's senior homicide investigator. Encouraged by his boss, the enigmatic but kindly City Prosecutor, Andrei Iamskov, and with the help of his favourite detective, Pasha, and a KGB informer called Fed, Arkady quickly establishes that one of the murder victims is a young American, James Kirwill, and the other two, a man and a woman, are small time Siberian crooks specializing in art forgeries. This alone is enough to establish it as a case for the KGB, but Pribluda mysteriously declines to take over and is supported in his refusal by the genial Iamskov. Arkady reluctantly continues his investigation and by a combination of painstaking research and brilliant deduction establishes that the murderer must have been a wealthy

American fur trader named John Osborne, who is a frequent visitor to Moscow and has friends in very high places.

At this point Martin Cruz Smith's thriller is less than halfway through and the rest of the book develops into a duel between Arkady and Osborne. Arkady knows that Osborne is the killer and even manages to meet him several times, but he can't prove anything without a motive. At first he thinks it is icon smuggling. Kostya Borodin, one of the dead Siberians, has traces of paint on his clothes. Then it emerges that Osborne has ordered a religious chest from Kostya, but none of this makes much sense, for Osborne, who has an enormous commercial empire and is rich beyond the dreams of avarice, could easily purchase rarer icons and far more precious chests than a minor crook like Kostya could procure. Perhaps, thinks Arkady, the chest's contents were more important than the chest itself, but the riddle remains: what could be of sufficient importance to Osborne to justify such brutal murders and the risks to his privileged position?

To get his answer Arkady is forced to follow a trail of greed and mayhem that leads to the violent deaths of Pasha and a Moscow racketeer called Golodkin; the murder of his best friend, Mishka, a shoot-out in the grounds of Moscow University with, of all people, Prosecutor Iamskov, who turns out to have been not only a KGB plant in the militia but also an old wartime buddy of Osborne and his chief accomplice; Arkady's own arrest and interrogation by the KGB (during which he discovers in Major Pribluda merely another victim of the system); and his ultimate dispatch to New York in pursuit of Osborne and the contents of the mysterious chest. Along the way he loses his pretty wife Zoya to a scheming Party careerist; falls in love with an even prettier dissident called Irina whose one obsession is to get to America and who is also an accomplice of Osborne; and tangles with James Kirwill's brother William, a New York City detective who has come to Moscow to investigate his brother's murder for himself. In the final pages a furious chase from Manhattan to an obscure farm on Staten Island, involving Arkady, Irina, Osborne, Kirwill and members of the FBI and KGB ends in one last gun battle in which Arkady gets his man and the only survivors are Arkady and Irina. But she is intent on staying in America, whereas he is determined to return to Moscow, so that at the moment of their final triumph, they part.

This summary does scant justice to a novel whose labyrinthine plotting and

meticulous building of suspense are well-nigh flawless. Only the subplot involving William Kirwill and his antics is somewhat contrived. For the rest, the investigation unfolds with the logic of a chess game, but with sufficient twists and turns and sudden surprises to baffle even the most sleuth-like lovers of mystery.

Apart from the plot, the chief interest of *Gorky Park* lies in its detailed and utterly convincing picture of Moscow low life, of the seamy underworld of petty crooks and informers, dingy bars and the sleazy suburbs, and of the daily routine of the Moscow police force. Indeed, so detailed is the author's apparent knowledge of the realities of Soviet life that one begins to suspect Martin Cruz Smith of being two different people: a Soviet émigré and an American writer, working in the manner aspects of life, and a striking absence of illusions about his own activity. "He was used to being the harbingers, at best of ill news, at worst of disaster." His only heroic quality is the ability to preserve detachment in the face of the malice, animosity and innuendo which are part of the aftermath of murder. The six novels in which he appears (seven, if you count *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, where he takes a minor role) quickly become classics of the genre, justly since they fulfil all the requirements of detective fiction (the detail is always vivid, the suspense compelling and the plots ingenious), and add a distinctive quality of their own.

In her last novel, *Innocent Blood* (1980), P. D. James broke away from the detective formula. She is at present working on the second Cordelia Gray novel (the first was *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, published in 1972). Here she talks to Patricia Craig about her life and work.

PDJ I was born in 1920, and I find this a great convenience because I'm so bad about dates; it means I always know how old I am. I was the eldest child of a middle-grade civil servant who worked for the Inland Revenue. I was born in Oxford, which was very pleasant for me. I have a sister eighteen months younger and a brother eighteen months younger again. We always lived in very beautiful towns and cities—after Oxford we moved to Ludlow on the Welsh borders, and then when I was eleven we moved to Cambridge. I think my parents were rather restless. They liked moving house, and of course they always moved, because my father could simply apply for a transfer to another income tax office. I went to the Cambridge High School, in Cambridge, which is still one of my favourite cities.

I didn't have any further education; I wanted very much to go to university, but this, of course, was before the war, and there weren't grants, and it really wasn't possible for my father to afford it. I worked for a time in an income tax office, where I was absolutely wretched; then I was kind of assistant stage manager with the Festival Theatre at Cambridge—a rather glorified name; but actually of course I was a dogbody. I sold the tickets to the gods and fettered and carried and so on. Still, I thought I might like to be a playwright, and I was happy there. But then the war broke out, and I went into a food office. I married young, and moved to London; my husband was a medical student and we were very happy, during the early part of the war, living in a tiny flat in Manchester Square.

PC How did you get into hospital administration and the civil service? PDJ Well, my husband eventually went off to the war—he was a doctor, and so he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps—and when he came back he was mentally ill and unable to work; and I had to support two small children. I lived with my parents-in-law; my husband was in hospital—indeed, a great variety of psychiatric hospitals, one after the other. I looked for a temporary job, but I couldn't find one, so I went to the National Health Service. When I was there, the chances were that he would recover, I went to evening classes and qualified in hospital administration. I got two diplomas, one in hospital administration, and one in medical records, so that I could get a senior post with a salary adequ-

## An interview with P. D. James

P. D. James is among the most successful and distinguished of recent detective writers. Her novels are stylishly and meticulously constructed, and her characters are as memorable as any in contemporary fiction.

PC Not unsuitable, of course, but still a fairly unusual job for a writer. Can you remember how you came to write your first novel?

PDJ Well, the surprising thing really was that I began so very late, because I knew from very early childhood that I wanted to write books. I hadn't the slightest doubt about that, it seemed to be something that I was just born knowing. And yet I was in my mid-thirties before I began work on my first novel. I think there were all sorts of excuses for not getting started—the war, and the need to support the family and have a safe job, and so on. Then, I realized

ate to support the family. Then after my husband's death in 1964 I took an examination to get into the British Home Civil Service, and was appointed as a principal in the Home Office.

PC It's obvious from the start that although your fiction followed a fairly orthodox pattern—

PDJ Oh, indeed it did.

PC — you never intended seriously to perpetuate the kind of detective novel that flourished between the wars: there's nothing in the least cosy or reassuring about your books.

PDJ No, I don't think there is.

PC In your early novels the victims generally are fairly unpleasant, or at least they display some abnormal characteristic which leads directly to their murder, so that they are not completely innocent victims. Sally Jupp in *Cover Her Face* is secretive, rash and acquisitive; Enid Holm in *A Mind to Murder* is awkward and

PC Was this one of the reasons why you changed your detective when you wrote *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*? Cordelia Gray is a private investigator who sets out systematically to get to the bottom of a mystery, and ends by tampering with the evidence in order to effect a morally justifiable outcome. We can't imagine Dalgleish behaving like this—his job is to uncover the facts and present them to his superiors, wherever his sympathies may lie.

PDJ Absolutely. Yes, I suppose that is the difference between them—she becomes involved, he doesn't. But I don't think that plot would have been suitable for Dalgleish in any case. I wanted to write about that girl, and that situation—the rather pathetic, rundown detective agency, the relationship between herself and Bernie [her partner, who has just committed suicide when the novel opens]—this really was the hub of the book. And, on a practical level, it would have been difficult to bring in Dalgleish, because obviously any real investigation of the boy's death would have been done by the Cambridge police—as in fact it was. This is one of the problems with having a Scotland Yard detective: unless you're prepared to keep all his crimes in London, you have to invent a good excuse for getting him to work in other parts of the country. In real life, of course, the provincial police forces are proud of their CID—they really don't send for Scotland Yard as they used to in the good old days of detective fiction—the 1920s, you know, when you called in the Yard on the slightest pretext.

PC I suppose one of the basic premises of detective fiction is the belief in a principle of pure evil, with murder as its most dramatic manifestation. The detective novel's imagination is always drawn to extreme situations—and I can think of few crimes more extreme, horrifying, or given the context, more effective, than the killing of Mark Callender in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. He is strung up, dressed in women's clothes and smeared with lipstick, to make it look as if he had hanged himself accidentally while indulging in a fairly common sexual perversion.

PDJ Yes, it is a very horrible murder.

PC At the end of this novel, the second murderer—who is a good

PC Yes, this is absolutely true. Place is tremendously important. In fact it's very often a place, rather than a particular plot, and sometimes a place rather than a character, which sparks off my imagination and gets a book started.

PDJ Yes, it did. Obviously, it was rather exciting to set a book in a forensic science laboratory, because there you have the "closed community" syndrome, and that made me interested. But having decided on the laboratory, I wanted to locate it in a part of the country which had some quality that intrigued me; and I felt like this about the Fens. I don't think I'm fond of the Fens, and I wouldn't want to live there; but they

PC Did this happen with *Death of an Expert Witness*?

PDJ Yes, it did. Obviously, it was rather exciting to set a book in a forensic science laboratory, because there you have the "closed community" syndrome, and that made me interested. But having decided on the laboratory, I wanted to locate it in a part of the country which had some quality that intrigued me; and I felt like this about the Fens. I don't think I'm fond of the Fens, and I wouldn't want to live there; but they

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."

PDJ I do, in fact. If I were a poet (a lovely thing to be, but I'm not) I think I'd enjoy writing sonnets—feeling, you know, that there was the discipline of a strict form and rhyming sequence and that the creative imagination must operate within those constraints.

PC You are, as Elizabeth Bowen said about herself, manifestly a writer for whom places loom large. I'm thinking of *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, with its very precise evocation of Cambridge and the surrounding countryside and small villages; and the London street markets and squares and seedy terraces of *Innocent Blood*.

PDJ Yes, this is another example of being interested in getting to know a part of the coast and wanted to write about it; Dunwich, and the sea slowly eating it away, and the desolation of the marshes on the east coast.

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."

PDJ I do, in fact. If I were a poet (a lovely thing to be, but I'm not) I think I'd enjoy writing sonnets—feeling, you know, that there was the discipline of a strict form and rhyming sequence and that the creative imagination must operate within those constraints.

PC You are, as Elizabeth Bowen said about herself, manifestly a writer for whom places loom large. I'm thinking of *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, with its very precise evocation of Cambridge and the surrounding countryside and small villages; and the London street markets and squares and seedy terraces of *Innocent Blood*.

PDJ Yes, this is another example of being interested in getting to know a part of the coast and wanted to write about it; Dunwich, and the sea slowly eating it away, and the desolation of the marshes on the east coast.

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."

PDJ I do, in fact. If I were a poet (a lovely thing to be, but I'm not) I think I'd enjoy writing sonnets—feeling, you know, that there was the discipline of a strict form and rhyming sequence and that the creative imagination must operate within those constraints.

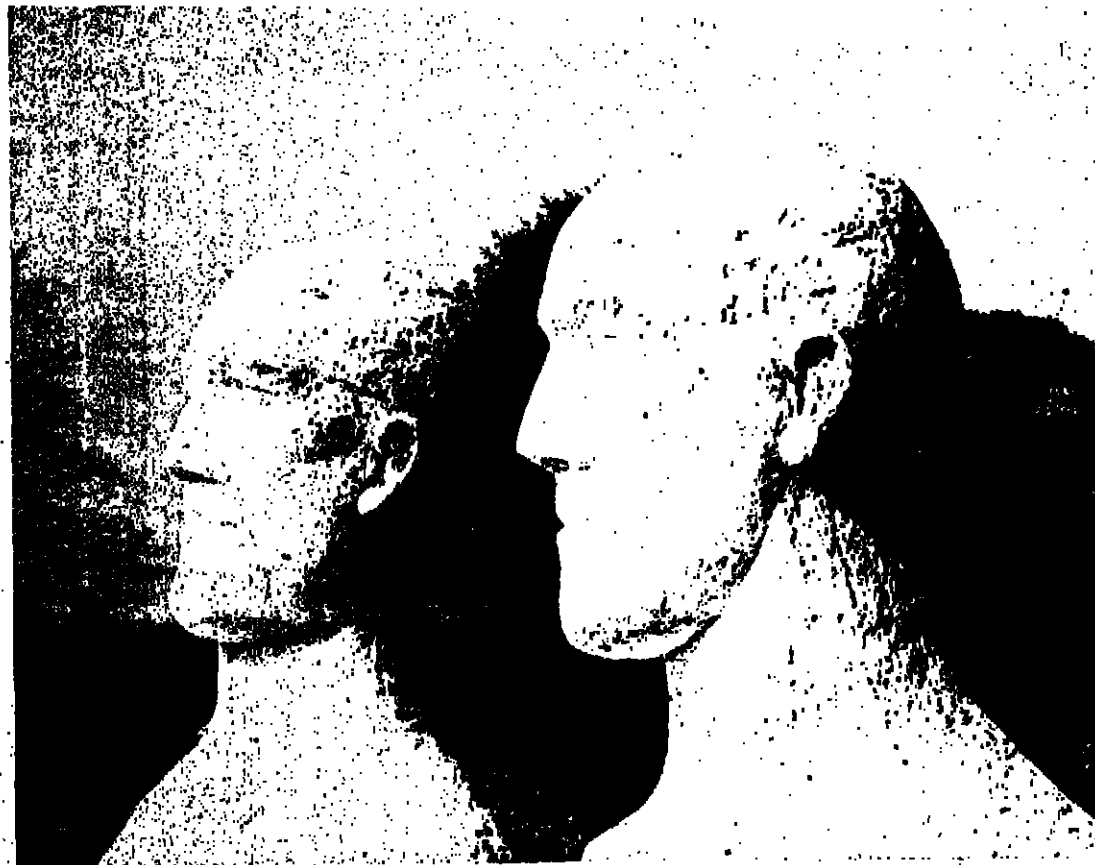
PC You are, as Elizabeth Bowen said about herself, manifestly a writer for whom places loom large. I'm thinking of *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, with its very precise evocation of Cambridge and the surrounding countryside and small villages; and the London street markets and squares and seedy terraces of *Innocent Blood*.

PDJ Yes, this is another example of being interested in getting to know a part of the coast and wanted to write about it; Dunwich, and the sea slowly eating it away, and the desolation of the marshes on the east coast.

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."

PDJ I do, in fact. If I were a poet (a lovely thing to be, but I'm not) I think I'd enjoy writing sonnets—feeling, you know, that there was the discipline of a strict form and rhyming sequence and that the creative imagination must operate within those constraints.

PC You are, as Elizabeth Bowen said about herself, manifestly a writer for whom places loom large. I'm thinking of *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, with its very precise evocation of Cambridge and the surrounding countryside and small villages; and the London street markets and squares and seedy terraces of *Innocent Blood*.



This "In Memoriam 1981 plaster for 2 bronzes" is included in an exhibition, to be reviewed in a forthcoming Commentary, of the recent sculpture of Elizabeth Frink at Waddington Galleries 11, 34 Cork Street, London W1 until June 27. The exhibits range from small animal works to some large standing figures such as a large Madonna and a Running Man.

have for me a sinister atmosphere, a bleakness and loneliness that I wanted to convey.

PC You say you enjoyed Dorothy L. Sayers—did you read a lot of detective fiction, and if so, what?

PDJ Very much the usual, really: Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, and of course the Americans. I read Hammett and Chandler, and I have a great admiration for them, although they write a very different type of book from my own, which I think of as being more or less in the English classical tradition. Indeed, my own first novel makes me smile a bit now, when I think of it; I really couldn't have chosen a more traditional setting than the English country house.

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."

PDJ I do, in fact. If I were a poet (a lovely thing to be, but I'm not) I think I'd enjoy writing sonnets—feeling, you know, that there was the discipline of a strict form and rhyming sequence and that the creative imagination must operate within those constraints.

PC You are, as Elizabeth Bowen said about herself, manifestly a writer for whom places loom large. I'm thinking of *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, with its very precise evocation of Cambridge and the surrounding countryside and small villages; and the London street markets and squares and seedy terraces of *Innocent Blood*.

PDJ Yes, this is another example of being interested in getting to know a part of the coast and wanted to write about it; Dunwich, and the sea slowly eating it away, and the desolation of the marshes on the east coast.

PC It's obvious from the start that although your fiction followed a fairly orthodox pattern—

PDJ Oh, indeed it did.

PC — you never intended seriously to perpetuate the kind of detective novel that flourished between the wars: there's nothing in the least cosy or reassuring about your books.

PDJ No, I don't think there is.

PC In your early novels the victims generally are fairly unpleasant, or at least they display some abnormal characteristic which leads directly to their murder, so that they are not completely innocent victims. Sally Jupp in *Cover Her Face* is secretive, rash and acquisitive; Enid Holm in *A Mind to Murder* is awkward and

PC Was this one of the reasons why you changed your detective when you wrote *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*? Cordelia Gray is a private investigator who sets out systematically to get to the bottom of a mystery, and ends by tampering with the evidence in order to effect a morally justifiable outcome. We can't imagine Dalgleish behaving like this—his job is to uncover the facts and present them to his superiors, wherever his sympathies may lie.

PDJ Absolutely. Yes, I suppose that is the difference between them—she becomes involved, he doesn't. But I don't think that plot would have been suitable for Dalgleish in any case. I wanted to write about that girl, and that situation—the rather pathetic, rundown detective agency, the relationship between herself and Bernie [her partner, who has just committed suicide when the novel opens]—this really was the hub of the book. And, on a practical level, it would have been difficult to bring in Dalgleish, because obviously any real investigation of the boy's death would have been done by the Cambridge police—as in fact it was. This is one of the problems with having a Scotland Yard detective: unless you're prepared to keep all his crimes in London, you have to invent a good excuse for getting him to work in other parts of the country. In real life, of course, the provincial police forces are proud of their CID—they really don't send for Scotland Yard as they used to in the good old days of detective fiction—the 1920s, you know, when you called in the Yard on the slightest pretext.

PC I suppose one of the basic premises of detective fiction is the belief in a principle of pure evil, with murder as its most dramatic manifestation. The detective novel's imagination is always drawn to extreme situations—and I can think of few crimes more extreme, horrifying, or given the context, more effective, than the killing of Mark Callender in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*. He is strung up, dressed in women's clothes and smeared with lipstick, to make it look as if he had hanged himself accidentally while indulging in a fairly common sexual perversion.

PDJ Yes, it is a very horrible murder.

PC At the end of this novel, the second murderer—who is a good

PC Yes, this is absolutely true. Place is tremendously important. In fact it's very often a place, rather than a particular plot, and sometimes a place rather than a character, which sparks off my imagination and gets a book started.

PDJ Yes, it did. Obviously, it was rather exciting to set a book in a forensic science laboratory, because there you have the "closed community" syndrome, and that made me interested. But having decided on the laboratory, I wanted to locate it in a part of the country which had some quality that intrigued me; and I felt like this about the Fens. I don't think I'm fond of the Fens, and I wouldn't want to live there; but they

PC Did this happen with *Death of an Expert Witness*?

PDJ Yes, it did. Obviously, it was rather exciting to set a book in a forensic science laboratory, because there you have the "closed community" syndrome, and that made me interested. But having decided on the laboratory, I wanted to locate it in a part of the country which had some quality that intrigued me; and I felt like this about the Fens. I don't think I'm fond of the Fens, and I wouldn't want to live there; but they

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."

PDJ I do, in fact. If I were a poet (a lovely thing to be, but I'm not) I think I'd enjoy writing sonnets—feeling, you know, that there was the discipline of a strict form and rhyming sequence and that the creative imagination must operate within those constraints.

PC You are, as Elizabeth Bowen said about herself, manifestly a writer for whom places loom large. I'm thinking of *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, with its very precise evocation of Cambridge and the surrounding countryside and small villages; and the London street markets and squares and seedy terraces of *Innocent Blood*.

PDJ Yes, this is another example of being interested in getting to know a part of the coast and wanted to write about it; Dunwich, and the sea slowly eating it away, and the desolation of the marshes on the east coast.

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."

PDJ I do, in fact. If I were a poet (a lovely thing to be, but I'm not) I think I'd enjoy writing sonnets—feeling, you know, that there was the discipline of a strict form and rhyming sequence and that the creative imagination must operate within those constraints.

PC You are, as Elizabeth Bowen said about herself, manifestly a writer for whom places loom large. I'm thinking of *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, with its very precise evocation of Cambridge and the surrounding countryside and small villages; and the London street markets and squares and seedy terraces of *Innocent Blood*.

PDJ Yes, this is another example of being interested in getting to know a part of the coast and wanted to write about it; Dunwich, and the sea slowly eating it away, and the desolation of the marshes on the east coast.

PC In your third novel, *Unnatural Causes*, the detective novelist, Maurice Seton, goes in for, as you put it, "Cosy English village or small town scene."



deal less culpable than the first — is disposed of, I thought, just a bit too conveniently.

**PDJ** Yes, [laughs] this is a justifiable criticism. The intention was that this particular death should have been not absolutely suicide, but one of those road accidents which occur because someone, subconsciously, doesn't want to go on living. But it does seem a bit too neat. The device of the off-stage exit isn't uncommon, of course, and it seems to suggest that writers and readers require some kind of retribution in the story — if the murderer isn't to be hanged, then he's got to be got rid of somehow.

**PC** At least you don't resort to the train in Serbia and the bullet through the heart.

**PDJ** I suppose it brings us to Oscar Wilde's definition of fiction as something in which the good triumph and the bad are punished. And this is one reason why, for some people, the detective story — however good it is — will always be classified as a sub-literary form, because of the contrivances and because, in the past, psychological truth was too often sacrificed to the demands of the plot.

**PC** But it's always possible to work within a formal framework and adapt it to your own purposes.

**PDJ** The more so, I think, because the novel is itself an artificial form; it's always imposing some kind of pattern on reality, which is, after all, what detective stories do. And the modern detective story has moved away from the earlier crudities and simplicities. Crime writers are as concerned as other novelists with psychological truth and the moral ambiguities of human action.

**PC** In fact, you use the detective framework to express some fairly complex ideas — what happens, for instance, when personal freedom and the power of action are threatened, as in *Shroud for a Nightingale*, where about half the characters are trying to exercise power, in some sense, over someone or other.

**PDJ** Also, in some books, the idea that love can be a great deal more lethal than hate; and the fact that, in an extraordinary way, good may or may not come out of evil, but, paradoxically, evil much more often comes out of good.

**PC** In your second novel you have someone remark that "most murders are sordid little crimes bred out of ignorance and despair". This, I think, refers to real-life murders, not the sort of crimes your books deal with. Murders in fiction are always on a much larger scale, and depend for their impact on interesting complications.

**PDJ** Yes, obviously there's a tremendous difference. The great majority of actual murders, in this country at least, are domestic. They happen because people are simply at the end of their tether. The number of homicides in which the victim isn't known to, or related to, the aggressor, is quite small; the motives usually are very obvious; and many of these crimes are fairly easy to detect, even if the guilty person doesn't confess, which happens quite often. In fiction, of course, we find devious crimes with very obscure motives, and a reasonable number of suspects. The detection is complicated, and requires a fair degree of deductive intelligence.

**PC** You've written one book, though, in collaboration with T. A. Crichley — *The Maul and the Pear Tree* — which is a factual account of some London murders.

**PDJ** It's about the murder of three families in the East End of London — off Ratcliffe Highway (a terrible slum highway) in 1811. I first read of the case in the *Newgate Calendar* — it's also the subject of *Old Bill's Murder Confessions* by a *Pinkie* Art. It was assumed that the suspect, one Williams, who committed suicide in prison, was responsible for the crimes; but we all felt, that he was a kind of fall guy. We had great fun searching out the papers, and the correspondences of the time — part of the interest in finding out what the East End was like then. Most of the people concerned worked in the docks and the first victim was an ex-convict. And it was fascinating to discover how violent crime was investigated in those

days. This case did lead to some demands for reform of the police, and to debates in parliament. What is interesting, too, is the amount of outrage these murders caused, especially as one tends to think of early nineteenth-century London as a violent place and murder a fairly common crime. After the suspect had been found hanged, his body was paraded through the East End with the instruments, the knife and so on, they thought he'd used. This rather gruesome procession halted in turn outside the houses of all the victims; and eventually the supposed culprit was buried at a crossroads, with a stake through his heart — all this as late as 1811.

**PC** It's obvious that a lot of careful research goes into your novels; you seem to take trouble to get all the details right, from the technical aspects of an investigation (for example, the scientific principle of electroforensis which is described in *Death of an Expert Witness*) to the daily routine in a Nurses' Home. I suppose some of this can be put down to your own experience of the settings described.

**PDJ** Yes, I don't think I could write a successful book that was set somewhere I'd never visited, never known, never been interested in, or one that had to do with a way of life that was totally alien to me — I like to write to that extent out of experience. But once I've devised the plot and the complications, I do a great deal of reading and research to make sure that the forensic and technical details are right.

**PC** Your last novel, *Innocent Blood*, is not in fact a detective story. Why did you decide to change to a different narrative form?

**PDJ** I think simply because this particular plot seemed to require a change of method — though the material could have been used in an orthodox detective story. The adopted eighteen-year-old in search of information about her parents — this character could have been a stranger to someone who found it necessary to put her out of action. But somehow I felt I wanted to do rather more with the theme. I wanted to write about the search for identity, revenge, redemption, if you like; and therefore I decided this had better be a novel that wasn't a straightforward detective story and wouldn't feature Dalgleish, and it developed in that way. The basic idea came to me partly as a result of the Act of Parliament which gave adopted children the right to see copies of their original birth certificates, and partly because of a real-life murder which I remembered. This took place over twenty years ago, when the death penalty was still in operation. A young man went to visit his wife and newly-born son in a nursing home in North London. On the way home he called in on his parents-in-law and battered them both to death with a television aerial. I can remember, at the time, thinking about the new-born baby and wondering what on earth was going to happen to him — I mean when he started asking questions about his missing relatives. How on earth do you explain to the child that his father was hanged for murdering his grandparents? I suppose this was at the back of my mind; and then, when the 1975 Children Act was passed, I began to think, suppose this led to some really rather dreadful disclosure? How would this affect the young person who had, as most of us do, a rather fabricated sense of acceptable persons for herself?

**PC** In fact you've lumbered your heroine, Philippa Palfrey, with absolutely the worst sort of hereditary imagination — father a rapist and mother a child-murderer. Yet, in a way, the novel reverses one of the themes of *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, in which Mark Callender is doomed, you might say, because of who his parents were. Philippa flourishes in spite of hers.

**PDJ** Having written about Philippa, who was at least initially a very difficult and rather implausible character, I am finding it pleasant at the moment, to be writing again about Cordelia Gray, who I think is basically an extremely agreeable and sympathetic young woman. It's also interesting to return to the classical detective story, though this doesn't mean that I won't try something different again in the future.

## The Swami's locked room

By J.I.M. Stewart

H.R.F. KEATING:  
Go West, Inspector Ghote  
213pp. Collins. £5.95.  
0 00 231289 1

Unlike the majority of fictional detectives, H.R.F. Keating's Inspector Ghote of the Bombay Police is a man much like ourselves only more so: diffident, misjudging his own powers, often sadly muddled by the unaccountable happenings assailing him. But at the same time he is endowed with a dim saving obstinacy and occasional flashes of anger which between them see him safely to the end of the road. Like Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison, he is typed to move through a variety of trying situations in which he comports himself, if not like Sir Charles "uniformly well", yet with a pertinacious devotion to common sense which unfailingly enables him to point out something not obvious to more aggressive policemen or private eyes in the final moments of a complex criminal affair.

Sometimes at the beginning of an investigation this tone is established by the abrupt projecting of the Inspector into an enormous room in which there is an enormous desk behind which sits an important personage amid a battery of telephones and electric typewriters. In *Filmi, Filmi, Inspector Ghote*, 1976, he was still half at home, since the

showbiz dazzle suddenly confronting him is sited in the Bollywood film studios of his native city. But in *Go West, Inspector Ghote* the case is very different. Bollywood has become Hollywood, and it is through Beverly Hills that he is driven to his new assignment by an appalling Californian called Fred Hoskins, an unsuccessful policeman who has set up as a private investigator. In Beverly Hills, Hoskins tells Ghote, are to be found "some of the most luxurious homes in the world". Ghote does his best to keep his end up, retorting that "In Bombay also our film stars are having most posh homes". Hoskins is not impressed.

And as with dwellings so with places of religious retreat. The traditional ashram — or so the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us — "is built of wattle and mud, and its roofs are of leaves". But in California the establishment of the celebrated Swami Without a Name is a more imposing affair. There is a Visitors' Centre in which one can buy, among other things, an "Electronic Meditation Timer", and "Yoga Pants" ("Guaranteed Made in India"). The Meditation Hall with its big pure white dome is reminiscent of the control tower at Los Angeles airport. The Swami's private dwelling is a large square log cabin with no windows, only one entrance, and with a roof that appears as a tall spiral made out of translucent orange plastic. Here, we guess at once, is the setting for a classical locked-room mystery.

So it proves. Ghote's mission is to redeem from the Swami's thrall the daughter of a wealthy Sindhi business-

man in Bombay. But before much can be done about this the Swami's body is found, with its throat slit, as they say, from ear to ear, and no trace of a weapon to be found. Moreover, the chamber's only entrance chances to Ghote himself at the time the fatality must have occurred. The purity of the problem is perhaps a shade impaired by a general acceptance of those most concerned of the fact of bi-location. In India it is quite common for sacred persons to enjoy the power of instantaneously transporting themselves from one place to another.

There is commonly something disconcertingly mechanical about those locked rooms, and Mr Keating's new story is no exception. But its merit, which is very considerable indeed, lies quite elsewhere. When in *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock*, which appeared in 1968, Mr Keating brought his hero to England he revealed himself as commanding a comedy of the international situation such as might have won the admiration of Henry James himself. Mr Keating has an ear, and in the present story perfectly renders English as she is spoken severally in India and the United States. Mr Keating has an eye: "Eat All You Want," "Speed checked by Altrich," "Is your dog a picky eater?", "Most of all you need a Fashion Kitchen". The effect of all this shouting, whether on the freeway or TV or *voce viva* from the nightmarish Hoskins, upon an authentically rendered Indian sensibility seems to me the principal attraction of this otherwise slightly run-of-the-mill detective story.

As he put it in another verse: "Had she told the dicks how she got in that fix/I would be much apter to read the last chapter." Jimena Shore may be a middle-aged career woman, but she is certainly foolhardy. She receives a succession of intruders in her borrowed flat, never thinking to lock the windows which they use to enter it. She pluckily comes through being hit about the face, being locked in and locked out, and being deceived by one and all. But these grotesque happenings buffets our heroine through a charming landscape, or city scape. The convent school in Antonia Fraser's first novel, the Scottish Highlands in the second, and now a well-described Bloomsbury in this third, almost lend the plots verisimilitude. Some of the characters may be drawn from life, too, for there is a whiff of in-joke about them, and readers of these pages may well recognize Jamie Grand, editor of "a deeply pompous and deeply powerful paper".

The thirty-second episode in the forensic career of Sara Woods' impersonal barrister hero is quite unlike anything to be found in Antonia Fraser. No suspicion of *roman-a-clef* here, for Sara Woods lives in Canada, and her stories in London, and has not allowed her running characters (two three lawyers and their wives) to mature in twenty years. Her plots, and legal details are, as always, well told, and the individuals who appear as clients or opponents are as rounded as they would have seemed to their legal advisers in real life. It is those touching lawyers, identified by perfunctory labels, who reduce the reader's pleasure in what are otherwise well-written and excellently plotted mysteries. For Sara Woods' stories, like Antonia Fraser's, conform to the rules that need to appear in such manuals as *Mystery Fiction, Theory and Technique* (1974). The readers of neither will need the help of another: curious volume, perhaps the most of those published in 1947, called *How to Enjoy Mystery Fiction*.

Dorothy L. Sayers once wrote that "well meaning readers who try to identify the writer with his characters are frequently astonished by the ferocious rudeness with which the author himself salutes these efforts". Yet her own Harriet Vane had so much in common with Sayers that it has invariably been supposed the one is an idealized self-portrait of the other. In Jimena Shore, we meet a character who is described in terms similar to

Barbara Michael's rather woody-woody title *The Walker in Shadows* (222pp. Souvenir. £6.95. 0 285 62460 1) doesn't give much indication of what her novel is actually about. In fact it is a curious hybrid between an old-fashioned ghost story and a contemporary sentimental romance — out of which Wharton by Barbara Cartland, as it were, is rather what happens to a nice naive girl (recently widowed) and her handsome student son when gorgeous blonde Kathy and her satirical lawyer father move in next door. "His caught her unawares" and for a few moments after that she didn't even hear the knocking. . . . Meanwhile a Confederate soldier, thoughtlessly buried in the collar becomes the focus of a series of psychic upheavals: expensive items of furniture fly through the air (no-one seems to worry what the insurance company will think), mysterious glowing light and spiralling col-

umes of ectoplasm appear. Despite the novel's stereotyped characters and rather clichéd supernatural phenomena, its conversations are amusing, its generalities convincing. At one point the reader's hopes are raised as the novel insists "I can't remember a single case in which a ghost was laid by an intrepid investigator who found out what was troubling the troubled spirit. . . . In fiction, yes. Not in fact." Now be honest. Do you know of any such case? But the young hero is determined to suss the whole thing out, and intensive investigations into local history soon reveal a dramatic story of star-crossed lovers and a jealous, traitorous lover, when finally not a wisp belied.

Julia Briggs

## Translating the Stoic sage

By C. H. Slisson

W. S. MERWIN (Translator):  
The Satires of Persius  
Introduction and notes by  
William S. Anderson  
109pp. Anvil Press. £3.95.  
0 85646 019 2

When Persius died at the age of twenty-eight his manuscripts were not despatched to the vaults of a university library; a kindly friend destroyed his earlier works altogether. This left the six *Satires* by which he is known to the world. W. S. Merwin's version was first published in the United States in 1961. It is now made accessible here, with an excellent introduction by William S. Anderson.

Persius was born in AD 34, that is to say towards the end of the reign of Tiberius; his early death was in the reign of the artist Nero. Persius "belonged to the upper classes. . . . says professor Anderson. "His family possessed the property qualifications to make him a knight; besides, he was linked by relationship and marriage to the Senatorial class." Coming from somewhere between Rome and Genoa, he was naturally sent to Rome for instruction by the best masters. One of these was "the eminent grammarian Remmius Palaemon, who was a friend of the poet's father. . . . Anderson suggests, "have communicated to his pupil some of his basic love of language." Whether or not the future poet needed this grammatical instruction, he was undoubtedly influenced, in his general view of the world, by another of his tutors, the Stoic Aeneas Cornutus, who first placed a steady hand on his shoulder when he was fifteen or sixteen. The tone of Persius's family must have been friendly to Stoicism; when he was eight years old a female relative, possibly an aunt, committed a distinguished suicide to show her husband, who had been ordered to kill himself, how to do it. Cornutus was from the household of

Seneca, with whom Persius became acquainted, as he did with Seneca's nephew Lucan, the poet of the *Pharsalia*. (Another of Lucan's uncles was that Gallio who, as "deputy of Achaia", told the Jews that "made insurrection" against Paul that, if it were "a question of words and names" and of their law, he would have nothing to do with it.)

Cornutus was not only a Stoic philosopher but a tragedian, and he wrote "treatises on orthography and on the allegorization of myth"; there was already, through these literary circles of post-Augustan times, something which we should call academic, as compared with the world of Horace and Vergil — to say nothing of that of Catullus and Lucretius — though the final refinements of Ausonius's circles were still centuries away. Persius himself seems to have been more susceptible of academic influences than either Martial (born AD 38) or Juvenal (born AD 55) — partly, perhaps, because he was grander, socially, than either of those two, but also as a matter of temperament. There is something doctrinaire and not quite like life about him. He kept aloof from the corruptions of the court, as they say, but it is not only that. Persius, as Anderson has it, "does not strike most readers as sufficiently experienced". He probably spent too long on all those books of Chrysippus. "He is the Stoic sage in his private paradise. . . . he talks to his audience as though it were composed of Stoics able to comprehend his dogmas, or fools utterly beyond the reach of rational appeal." With this went a style compressed in the extreme, deliberate — he was a slow writer — and ingenious. He is "very dark Author" as Swift said. All these characteristics amount to a poet difficult to translate in any age and, one would have thought, not offering any ready accessibility in our own.

Merwin must, indeed, have had a very hard task. Anderson describes him as a "poet sympathetic with his material", but a style which is over-

wrought, as that of Persius may be said to be, has very great dangers for any translator. Merwin allows himself more lines than the original — about a third more, in the first satire. Given the nature of the text and the difference between the genius of the two languages, the extra allowance is not large. But what exactly has the translator to aim at? Not a conversational style, for that is not exactly what Persius gives us, even when he is writing what purports to be dialogue. Yet of course there is a conversational element. So we get:

And can't you guess the origin of those miming lyrics which give  
The seated gentry such pleasure?

That you can't save some old geezer's bacon without wanting  
A pat on the back?

One has the impression of conversational phrases squeezed into a strait-waistcoat of artificiality: a combination which certainly corresponds to some-

thing in Persius. Should we ask for an ease the original does not have? The answer perhaps is Yes, unfair though that sounds. Mr Pope "would know whether it is designed for an elegant Translation, or only to show the Meaning." A huge loss from the original is inevitable, but no translation that is for more than "only to show the Meaning" can avoid the necessity of being governed, in the last resort, by the language into which it is being made.

Anderson asserts that "in many respects Persius's virtuosity, coupled as it is with . . . passion, can say more to us and our literary sensibilities than it could to many an age before our time." This is what the translator has to prove, by the liveliness of his language. With Merwin this liveliness extends sometimes to the phrase, occasionally to the sentence, rarely to the paragraph. The result is a version which will certainly be helpful in giving a notion of what

Persius wrote about, the sort of man he was and the kind of satire he wrote. It does not quite amount to bringing Persius alive for us, which could perhaps only be done by taking him by the scruff of the neck, as Dryden did. Dryden allowed himself something like twice as many lines as Persius, but for Merwin's:

Not give a clipped coin for a hundred of your highbrow Greeks  
We get

And prize a hundred Zeno's, just as much  
As a clipped Sixpence, or a Schilling Dutch

No-one is to be blamed for not writing as well as Dryden, and Merwin probably did the right thing to be more patient with his author. Certainly his introduction, makes a useful addition to the Anvil Press's excellent series of translations.

## An honourable man

By Robin Seager

M. L. CLARKE:  
The Noblest Roman  
Marcus Brutus and His Reputation  
157pp. Thames and Hudson. £10.  
0 500 40040 7

This curious book falls into three sections, all brief: a historical biography of Brutus; an examination of his reputation through the ages and his role in debates on the ethics of tyrannicide; and an extremely sketchy review of the largely uninspired and uninspiring works of literature in which he plays a part.

The history is somewhat antiquated and at times careless. Caio's mission to Cyprus is presented as planned by the coalition, which denies Clodius credit for a brilliant improvisation, made possible only when Gaius Cassius as his province Syria instead of Cilicia as originally intended. Cicero's expressions of good-will towards Ap. Claudius are implausibly taken at their face value. By his *pro Milone* Brutus is said to have been "aligning himself with Cicero and the senatorial party against Caesar and the popular party". Statius Marcus appears as Statius, while the left-over Pompeian Caecilius Bassus is mislabeled a Caesarian. In 44 Antony wanted Gaius Comata, not Transalpinus, with Cisalpinia.

Several problems are glossed over, especially in the account of Brutus's early career. That his father was legate to the rebel Lepidus is not made clear, and the version of his death least favourable to Pompey is retailed without a hint that other stories exist. The discussion of Brutus's date of birth is also unsatisfactory; it may well be true that Cicero's version must prevail, but one would like to know the nature of the evidence that supports Velleius. However, the tale that Brutus was Caesar's son is very properly dismissed. The related questions of the identities of Brutus's adoptive father and of the rejected fiancée of Caesar's daughter Julia may both admit of no answer, but they deserve better treatment than they get here. The significance of Brutus's marriage to Porcia is another unsolved puzzle, but it is right not to speculate about relations between her and Servilia. In the notorious affair of the Salaminian loan it is surely too charitable to suggest that Brutus was perhaps unaware of at least some of the excesses of his agents; on the other hand it is fair criticism of Cicero to point out that his outrage rapidly evaporated when the matter ceased to be an embarrassment to himself.

So to Brutus the conspirator. That his motives were honourable is taken for granted throughout, and is probably true. But the admittedly not unbalanced assertion of Nicolaus of Damascus that the leading conspirators wanted to take over Caesar's power interests discussion, even if it is to be rejected. Too much is made of Brutus's alleged hereditary duty of opposition to despotism and the poli-

tical significance of his coins: he had after all no other ancestors worth recalling. It was as a guarantor of moral respectability, not as a symbol of devotion to freedom, that he was essential to the plot. Besides, in a sense, all precedents were irrelevant: a perpetual dictator was a new phenomenon, beyond the reach of any check less than assassination, a point well taken, as M. L. Clarke later observes, by Montesquieu.

The treatment of the period from the Ides of March to Philippus is the best part of Clarke's book. The reasons why the republican constitution did not start to work again of its own accord, as the conspirators seem to have hoped that it would, are well expounded. Every act of moderation on their part, however commendable morally, was fated to prove politically disastrous. Brutus, Cassius and their supporters passed rapidly from futility to illegality, while the initiative shifted to Antony, Octavian and Cicero. Brutus's attitude to Cicero's cultivation of Octavian is particularly revealing of the man. His criticisms are formulated entirely in terms of moral principles, not of political feasibility; it is clear that he had not the faintest idea of what Cicero was in fact trying to achieve. Clarke too faults Cicero for trusting Octavian, which Cicero surely never did. He was not even really outmanoeuvred intellectually by the boy wonder: it was merely his fate and Clarke prefers to follow Plutarch in letting him die with his faith in virtue unshaken; method as well as sentiment commends this choice.

It is largely no fault of the author that the second section seems superficial. Most of the writers whose work he discusses knew virtually nothing about Brutus and cared less. In later Rome the rapidly established schematic contrast between Brutus and Cassius rendered most judgments valueless, while the intervention of Christianity added nothing of interest. More might, however, have been said about Crenatius Cordus, and it may be unjust to Tiberius to imply that the *imagines* of Brutus and Cassius were not allowed to appear in Julia's funeral procession. But in the end the historian must be chiefly struck by the wildness of the fantasies of Dromann, Zumpt and Gardthausen, eloquently reported here, which cannot but induce in him a mood of sombre and, it is to be hoped, salutary self-doubt.



This photograph of a fragmentary, posthumous portrait of Pompey is taken from the *Image of Augustus by Susan Walker and Andrew Burnett* (199pp. British Museum Publications. £2.95. 0 7141 1270 4).

## The Roman general

By T. P. Wiseman

PETER GREENHALGH:  
Pompey: the Republican Prince  
200pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.50.  
0 297 77881 1

Until three years ago, there was no full-length biography of Pompey in English. Now there are three. John Leach's *Pompey the Great* (1978) is a worthy effort, but not up to the standard of the subject; Robin Seager's *Pompey: a Political Biography* (1979) is wholly admirable within its limitations, but it was war, not politics, that made Pompey great. Now we have Peter Greenhalgh's two volumes, *The Roman Alexander* (reviewed in the TLS in 1980), and *The Republican Prince* (1981), artificially divided for the publisher's convenience, but forming a single biography on a scale more than twice as lavish as that of his predecessors. It is an impressive work — not a total success, but with virtues that usefully complement those of Seager.

In a sense, the lavish scale is an illusion. As with any figure of the ancient world, even from so well-documented a period as the mid-first century BC, the coverage is bound to be patchy, depending on the detail of the sources — or indeed the reliability of any source material at all. A good example is provided by an episode in the Civil War. Pompey and his army were in Greece, preparing to attack the Gauls, when they were suddenly called to Spain to deal with the rebel Pompeian forces there. A not recorded what instructions were given to his three legates in Spain. . . . Dr. Greenhalgh writes,

but we get ten pages of detailed narrative about their vicissitudes, followed by: "How Pompey reacted to the news of the capitulation of his army in Spain and the fall of Madaia we do not know." What we want to hear about is his collection of very dark Author's *Commentaries*: "concentrates on the side-show in Spain, and that is what the narrator is forced to give us.

Greenhalgh is above all a military historian, and he is at his best with the narrative of the Civil War. He offers a sound and convincing defence of Pompey's strategy against the criticisms of Cicero's distraught letters to Atticus and the simplistic hindsight of the later sources, and in the details of the campaigns he handles Caesar's necessarily partial account with an exemplary critical finesse. To some extent the same is true of the political history, particularly in his insistence on Pompey's dominant position throughout the "fifties" and the impact of his theatre games and the spectacular complex of 55. But what mars the political narrative is a self-indulgent extravagance of style which Greenhalgh does not permit himself, when describing warfare.

It may, I suppose, be all right to make a whole substantial paragraph out of the sustained metaphor of the "state physician" — though if it is a *tour de force* which distracts the reader's attention away from what is being said to the way the author is saying it, it may cause no more than a wry smile to be asked to imagine Cicero proscribing his forensic skills before the altar of political expediency; or a senatorial debate described in terms of angry hawks swooning over thick-skinned emeralds. But when we get Pompey in 52 "opening legal floodgates to swell a torrent of litigation that would scour



# Between brass and silver

By Helen McNeil

**JOHN ASHBERRY:**  
As We Know  
118pp. Carcanet. £4.95.  
0 85635 347 4

**DAVID LEHMAN (Editor):**  
Beyond Amaze: New Essays on John Ashbery  
294pp. Cornell University Press.  
0 8014 1235 8

**JONATHAN HOLDEN:**  
The Rhetoric of the Contemporary Lyric  
136pp. Bloomington, Indiana.  
Indiana University Press. £7.80.  
0 253 15667 X

Since the death of Robert Lowell, the title of most important American poet has been on offer to John Ashbery. In "Litany", the magnificent long poem that begins *As We Know*, Ashbery has taken up that title while declining the magisterial stance that usually goes with even an unofficial laureateship. Only late Wallace Stevens and the Auden of *In Praise of Limestone* can stand comparison to "Litany's" great meditation on the incomplete metamorphoses of the middle phase of life. In "Litany", we are lost, but not in a dark wood. We wander in Ashbery's recurrent images of blandly beautiful suburbia; or we contemplate the foot of a purgatorial hill, "ignoring and then anointing its edge"; or we gaze at a sunset alluvial landscape or shipwreck-without-ship described as natural scenes but also taken from Caspar David Friedrich paintings.

The length and wearied ambition of "Litany" mark it as a major continuation of the argument of Stevens's "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven". To this extent it validates the Harold Bloom view of Ashbery as inheritor of an American tradition passing from Emerson through Stevens. More important, however, is Ashbery's isolation. "Litany" is against transcendence as much as against the real; and its stylistic mannerisms and inconclusiveness, continued from Ashbery's earlier poetry, are equally "against interpretation." "Litany" is against transcendence in two parallel columns, speak to us, to themselves, but never quite to each other. A first reading of "Litany" reveals little; since it is a poem about how only by saying the same thing over and over can one gain an understanding of the conditions of temporal existence.

For a poet of his stature, Ashbery has had more than his share of epics. The ten essays in David Lehman's *Beyond Amaze: New Essays on John Ashbery* mark a new stage in Ashbery's growing acceptability. Productively differing in their critical terminology, the essays share an attitude of homage, which must partly be due to their all having been commissioned for this volume. Most are about Ashbery "as" something: as influenced, as iconoclast, as dream narrator, as "theoretical prophet" or as dismantler of "bourgeois discourse". This last argument, by Keith Cohen, is based on Ashbery's foisting of whimsical realism; it ignores the fact that Ashbery is also a great celebrator of bourgeois settings. Few of the essays attempt the complex task of interpreting Ashbery; only David Rigsbee's essay on "These Lacustrine Cities" succeeds in going against the grain of his work in this way.

Ashbery's "difficulty" arises partly, but not wholly, from the fact that his work doesn't fit into any of the received chronologies of twentieth-century American poetry, whether these be Eliot modernism followed by Confessional, rejection, Pound, Williams Imagism leading to Beats and Neo-Imagists, or the one-man tradition of Stevens. This is because Ashbery is a poet of the avant-garde, not a "post-modernist". He takes his concept of artistic responsibility from the tradition of the "new" which has dominated Western art since Cézanne. The avant-garde Ashbery has no order to live, breaking traditional form as a prerequisite for knowledge. This

avant-gardism preceded literary modernism and has survived it.

Modern art was the first and most powerful influence on Ashbery. As he has remarked several times, when he began to write in the 1950s, American poetry was constrained and formal while American abstract-expressionist art was vigorously taking over the heroic responsibilities of the European avant-garde. Any analogies between Ashbery's poetry and abstract expressionism depend, however, upon Ashbery's identification with both the critical viewer and the artist. In *The Rhetoric of the Contemporary Lyric*, Jonathan Holden is happy to tell us that Ashbery "possessed the skill to produce a first-rate 'abstract-expressionist' poetry as evocative and sturdy as the paintings of Willem de Kooning". Holden's essay is a valuable acknowledgment of de Kooning's current role as cultural totem for genius, but it says little about Ashbery, who for reasons of literary history has always scrupulously avoided any appearance of abstract expressionist-type heroism: there is, for Ashbery, no dramatic encounter with the page. In any case, if a direct poet-artist comparison must be made, Giorgio Cavallon would come closer to Ashbery than de Kooning.

Ashbery's decades of practice as an art critic have given his poetry a consistent awareness of the multiple acts of transformation (or "speculation") in Ashbery's sense of mirroring that are involved in using language to write about things seen. Even before Cézanne, the two-dimensional picture plane was always partly "about" illusion. Parmigianino, Ingres, Picasso, and de Kooning, Ashbery's favourite artists, all stressed this illusion-making process. The "painting-poem" that Ashbery projects in his anti-Horatian address to his muse, "And *Ut Pictura Poesis* is her Name", comes, as painting is often said to come, from an "almost empty mind/colliding with the lush, Rousseau-like foliage of its desire to communicate". Ashbery's gesture towards the reader is consistent; it is only the motifs of subject matter that change alarmingly. Fred Moramarco reminds us in his essay (in Lehman's collection) of *Some Trees*, that when Ashbery did finally take on a literary influence it was the dissociative surrealism of Raymond Roussel. Ashbery's collections since *Some Trees* can be seen as a gingerly and still incomplete approach to literariness. "Litany" is full of allusive assonances, bent echoes of earlier poets whose situations Ashbery uses without permitting the verbal echo to evoke an entire literary tradition.

In his interview with Polish poet, Piotr Sommer in the May 1981 issue of *Quarto*, Ashbery remarks that no one now thinks it odd that Picasso painted faces with eyes and mouth in the wrong place, while the hold of realism in literature is such that the same kind of image in a poem would still be considered shocking. Subject matter, Ashbery implies, should be as irrelevant to the present-day poem as it is to a Cézanne still-life. The real is of strictly historical interest.

Like one of Miller's "Cleaners" extracting

## Russian Collage

That year I took Autumn as a friend  
nostalgia was in my house.  
Yet when I reached you from Vladivostok  
on the telephone,  
I was certain I knew at you, I knew,  
I try to wake you,  
and this was only a wound  
with a little cloud of torture over it.  
Meanwhile and slowly, I submit  
to the black mail of circumstance.  
In broadrimmed hats and long overcoats,  
with whole notebooks of poems,  
long dark eyes you crumbled to ashes  
like leafless pine branches.  
That year I took Autumn as my friend.

Julie Whitty

This or that from the vulgar stubble,  
with the roistering  
Of harvesters long extinct, dead for the  
ear . . .

When what Stevens called "the vulgar of experience" appears in "Litany", it is less a common language than a pile of virtually interpretation-proof images. Stevens searched for a suitably impoverished "plain sense of things" in his later poetry, but for Ashbery's speaker this is a Casey-at-the-bat sort of earnestness, "too old-hat", while its apparent alternative is idiot Black Mountain oversimplification of experience: "Enjoy/You as you are/The pleasant taste of you". With vernacular irony Ashbery calls this cross between Robert Creeley and E. J. Thiribb "a class act/That doesn't look like a class act. . . ."

"Litany" is a long poem — three thousand lines — that needs its length. Like romance, it depends for its effect upon almost infinitely extendable emblematic incidents taking place on the same plane. As part of his landscape of time passing, one of Ashbery's speakers even sees Langland's "fair field full of folk", who are among the few other people in the poem. "Litany's" three sections are structured in twenty-to-forty-line unfurlings of some premise, anecdote, or style of diction. A "source" or "origin of the present" typically descends to "sidewalk shrubbery" where it can "become itself" with mixed results. In *Five Temperaments*, David Kalstone called this habit of mind Ashbery's "myth of diminution". Each unfurling section acts as a miniature of "Litany's" broad premise that we live in repeated cycles of false discovery, but cumulatively they convey a happier theme of evolution by repetition. In the companion poem "Late Echo" this theme is made explicit:

Alone with our maddest and favorite  
flower  
We see that there really is nothing left  
to write about.  
Or rather, it is necessary to write about  
the same old things  
In the same way, repeating the same  
things over and over  
For love to continue and be gradually  
different.

When "fatality" announces the beginnings of the Age of Brass halfway through "Litany", Ashbery provides his poem with an Ovidian myth. As David Bromwich has argued persuasively, "Litany" depicts the middle two ages of man in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the left-hand column, Brass is the voice of our ahistorical present, condemned to repetitious cycles. In the right-hand column, the more obviously poetic Silver is at home with time and tradition, but is fatally desperate for love. Although the voice later identified as Silver initially attracts sympathy, it is also at times that of a Victorian collector and nostalgia artist. Meanwhile Brass struggles through the "sunken Parmassus" of the busily empty everyday. The voices change diction and reverse attitudes. It is Brass who remembers the "radiant presence" of the disappeared god, and it is Silver who beautifully evokes the fashionable quiddity of the Yellow River, flowing even without anyone to see it. These mythological characterizations are, no more than general

guides; their overlap shows that the same patterns of experience will eventually turn up even in different minds. While Brass literally has the last word, "Litany" doesn't end with an Age of Brass taking over from an Age of Silver. Throughout, Ashbery's parallel columns have been suggesting that at any point two voices are better than one. When I heard Ashbery and Ann Lauterbach recite "Litany" in January 1980 in New York, their voices combined to create a powerful musical flow, with the single-voice sections acting as meditative "notes". Recited unironically, "Litany" had a plangency which the printed version does not quite convey.

In "Litany's" second section, Ashbery crisply addresses himself to the reader who has been looking for the poem's meaning. The Brass voice remarks apply of the preceding evocation of disappearing gods: "Honey, it's all Greek to me, I—". This speaker isn't given a chance to expound his down-to-earth views, however, since a pedantic, Victorian voice announces that he should

... soon again be the same man as before —  
Meaning: the same nausea when I heard  
cheerful talk,  
The same grief, the same deep and  
prolonged meditation,  
And almost the same frenzy and  
oppression.

This passage is "just to make sure" we get the point that the more we reason out our progress, the less likely we are to change life or find happiness. Ashbery's patterns of repressed rage, discovery, and disarming self-knowledge do not boil down to an "it"; the point we need to "get" is the pattern of discovery and descent.

Even though "Litany" and the shorter lyrics of *As We Know* are littered with anecdotal detail, we are never, as with Robert Lowell, encouraged to believe we have the "real" John Ashbery. An Ashbery poem may change from "I" to "he" to "we" to "you" without warning, and even "it" — as in Stevens's late poetry — often has no discernible referent. One benefit of this confounding of pronouns is that the poems do not require readers ("you") to feel sympathetic towards the author ("me"). Other recent solutions to the problem of the speaker have been less happy. What Jonathan Holden in *The Rhetoric of the Contemporary Lyric* nicely terms "the abuse of the second-person pronoun" is the easy way out by which the American poet addresses a semi-private "you". Retaining an intimate and urgent tone, [the poet] can seem also to speak for the entire human race". John Koethe's essay in Lehman's collection, "The Metaphysical Subject in John Ashbery", must be essential reading for anyone concerned with the evolution of the speaker in modern poetry. Koethe sees Ashbery's speaker as a profoundly anti-Cartesian "subject" which is neither ego nor body but a self that inhabits a "durationalness" now, approaching and withdrawing from the notion of physical life in real time. Koethe implicitly offers a way of seeing modern poetry as before and after the impact of linguistic philosophy, linking flight from the Cartesian ego to the recognition of language as construct.

Koethe correctly sees Ashbery's abstracted "subject" as non-linguistic, but the voices in "Litany" do express needs. Silver admits pathetically "I want you, I need you". Underneath the pragmatism and the poetical, each speaker wants a perfect lover to "take care of me"; he needs some Freudian Other, whether it is the lover, the reader, or the landscape. In "Litany" landscape seems to be the most poignantly desired love-object, infinitely responsive but uncontrollable, partly invented by our need for it. Every landscape is in part the product of an awesome repository of fetish-making devices — paintings, photographs, postcards, diaries, symbols, tapes, windows, translated texts. It is also a shadow, a replica and a counterfeit. The "most terrifying perceptions in 'Litany' are of gaps or lacks in the landscape and 'The vision' and 'us' collides again".

In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" Wallace Stevens declared that "The death of one god is the death of all". Ashbery, in the next generation, posits a poetic world in which transcendent metaphor is dead too. "Litany" is crowded with images and similes, but almost empty of symbols. In his dandyish essay (in Lehman's collection) on Ashbery's rhetoric, Douglas Crase remarks most suggestively that many of Ashbery's rhetorical figures are shared with the Longman sublime: both create awe by defeating expectations. We never know what is coming next and even our expectation of closure is defeated. Ashbery's metaphors, like Ovid's, show why experience is the way it is, but Ashbery's changes are ingrown or incomplete. Ashbery's Narcissus is blind, like Eros; he can get to the fatal pool but it is "muffled" because he can't see to complete his transformation and take on the mythic robe of self-regarding poet.

In a 1970 essay on Saul Steinberg, Ashbery coined the term "calligraphy" to describe the "ambiguously whole record of experience" in Steinberg's philosophical cartoons. Ashbery's intense argument for a mixed art like Steinberg's also describes his own ambitions:

Why shouldn't painting tell a story, or not tell it, as it sees fit? Why should poetry be intellectual and non-sensory, or the reverse? Our eyes, minds, and feelings do not exist in isolated compartments but are part of each other, constantly cutting, consulting and reinforcing each other. An art constructed according to the above canons, or any others, will either away since, having left one or more of the faculties out of account, it will eventually lose the attention of the others.

Ashbery's poetry is truly difficult because he wants his long calligraphies to contain everything. If literary traditions constrain this inclusive ambition, then he will find apparently non-literary ways of telling his stories.

Since the story of Ashbery's reputation holds a convex mirror to the state of American criticism in the 1960s and 1970s, Lehman's reverent collection needs a companion volume of essays, including the still uncollected essays, including the attacks by John Simon, Robert Boyers and Charles Molesworth, and spirited praise and analysis by (among others) Frank O'Hara, Richard Howard, Harold Bloom, David Kalstone and two of Lehman's contributors, Marjorie Perloff and Fred Moramarco, in earlier essays. Meanwhile Jonathan Holden's *The Rhetoric of the Contemporary Lyric* is very much a book of the present critical moment. Holden shows a fraternal interest in his fellow young American poets, giving an insider's view of controversies in American literary magazines in the late 1970s. Critic like Stanley Plumly and A. Poulin, Jr. are politely deferred to, while poets such as Sandra McPherson (whom he underestates), Philip Booth, Stephen Dunn and others are ranked and occasionally ticked off for mistakes.

One of the features of *The Rhetoric of the Contemporary Lyric* is Holden's workshop-type rewriting of various poems with person, tense or vocabulary changed. Though this pleasantly pedagogic technique is unfortunately passed off as linguistic analysis, Holden's rewrites can be devised to serve a deeper purpose. Take a well-known passage and change its vocabulary; perhaps to the style of another, reasonably well-known writer, while retaining the original syntax. Then ask friends to identify the original author and the "new" one. It's a game closer in spirit to John Cage than to Ashbery, but it has rewards.

Poems and features by John Arden, Richard Adams, Ivor Cutler, Adrian Henri, Roger McGough, Brian Patten, Tom Raworth, Heathcote Williams and others are included in the *Lucky Dip at the Crack of Doom*, issue of *New Departures*, No 13, available from Piedmont, Bisleigh, Stroud, Glos GL8 7BU at £1.00 plus p.p.c.

## Poetry of inclusion

By Douglas Dunn

**LOUIS SIMPSON:**  
*Caviare at the Funeral*  
89pp. Oxford University Press. £4.50.  
0 19 211943 5

In the late 1950s, Louis Simpson — like the late James Wright — dismantled the mastery verse technique of his previous writing to follow a more self-consciously American mode, one in which metre seems to have been abandoned as wicked. Readers who had been impressed by Simpson's (and Wright's) metrical accomplishments must have thought their new methodology a bit disabbling, a poet's peevish play — no sooner do you get to like their work than they change it. In retrospect, it looks as if a fresh and critical experience of the impact of American materialism was the most important factor in forming the important literary group that was to be seen then in Robert Bly's magazine(s) *The Fifties* and *The Sixties*.

This is Simpson's "American Poetry" (from his *Selected Poems*):  
Whatever it is, it must have  
A stomach that can digest  
Rubber, coal, uranium, moons,  
poems.  
Like the shark, it contains a shoe.  
It must swim for miles through the  
desert  
Uttering cries that are almost  
human.

A poetry capable of leaving nothing out, a digestive poetry, it despised abstract language at the same time as it gave the impression of looking, in a state of strenuous happenstance, for named and concrete things to include.

In his enjoyable new collection, *Caviare at the Funeral*, Simpson writes in "The Man She Loved" of a young writer in a family that is a little strange to him, "talking Yiddish". To their simple, affectionate questions, Simpson writes,

He returned simple answers.  
For how could he explain what it  
meant to be a writer . . .

a world that was entirely different,  
and yet it would include the gods  
and the small of chicken cooking.

An idea of "including" has been apparent in Simpson's poetry for some time. But although the range of experience from which he draws is a wide one — a Jamaican childhood, a re-imagined

Russia that was his mother's birthplace, Jewish families in Brooklyn, military service, post-War Paris, travels, living in California (and now Australia, which gets a sequence in the new book) — these sources are reiterated as often as his idea of inclusiveness is suggested. "The smell of chicken cooking" returns the reader to a poem of two decades ago, "A Story about Chicken Soup", as surely as the taste of the madeleine, that hint in the senses which can be anything and can come from anywhere.

"The Man She Loved" is like most of the poems in *Caviare at the Funeral* in that it is a story and proud of it. Most of the poems about death, and the questions one is at first tempted to ask, Chekhov appears to the Simpson's persistent standard of story-telling, which is as it should be. The book's title and the title poem come from Chekhov's story "In the Ravine" — "This was the village where the deacon ate all the caviare at the funeral". What we get in the poem, though, has little to do with Chekhov's gloomily evoked industrial village, but another story.

"Chocolates" is an amusing account of an incident from Chekhov's life. But the Chekhovian atmosphere on which Simpson's imagination seem to thrive is peculiarly adaptable to American settings. His story-telling also reminded me of a remark made by one of Chekhov's characters — "Keep it short and skip the psychology". Any fool can be brief, but to skip the psychology is an achievement for an American poet. In poems like "Sway", for example, or "Basic Blues" and "A Bower of Roses" (both about the 1940s), or "American Classic" (a Hopperesque roadside scene), Simpson effortlessly avoids psychological intrusions: he simply tells us what it was like, what happened or didn't happen, and who said what. Significances are evoked rather than moralized into grand finales. "A Bower of Roses" ends with an American soldier visiting an affectionate French whore. He lies beside her thinking about the young women he knew in America and "who would not let you do anything". He thinks about a song of the Great War, "How Are You Going To Keep Them Down On The Farm" (After They've Seen Paris).

The poem ends:

He supposed that this was what  
life taught you  
that words you thought were a joke,  
and applied to someone else,  
were real, and applied to you.

These things make an unforgettable impression,  
as though there were a reason for  
being here,  
in one place rather than another.

He supposed that this was what  
life taught you  
that words you thought were a joke,  
and applied to someone else,  
were real, and applied to you.

He supposed that this was what  
life taught you  
that words you thought were a joke,  
and applied to someone else,  
were real, and applied to you.

## Light on Frost

By Lachlan Mackinnon

**JAMES L. POTTER:**  
*Robert Frost Handbook*  
266pp. Pennsylvania State University  
Press. £9.  
0 271 00230 1

This book is very well designed as an introduction to Robert Frost aimed at the student and the general reader. Divided into four parts, it offers a biography of sufficient length (forty-two pages) to place the poems in temporal context before they are discussed thematically. A critical examination of the *oeuvre*, examination of the most apparent influences (Wordsworth, Emerson, Thoreau) and of Frost's poetic techniques, and an extensive annotated bibliography, all the tools required for initial study of the poetry are thus made available.

The detailed critical section opens by looking at Frost's use of indirectness. His work is next divided up in such a way as to show two apparently contradictory attitudes: one optimistic and occasionally jesting, the other tragic and sceptical. These are then brought together to discuss Frost's essentially ironic ambivalence. James L. Potter has drawn here on Richard Bowers' account of Frost's self-perceptions, and how these both inhibit and make possible his achievement, but clearly in the space

available he cannot dig very deeply. What he says is competent if not strikingly new, and clear enough to stimulate thoughtful qualification.

The discussion of influences is very abbreviated and thus too simple (particularly in the case of Wordsworth) to do more than provoke further inquiry, but this much it should do. The treatment of Frost's poetic techniques is short but sensible, relating his practice of metaphor to his conception of himself as a synecdochist and pointing towards his prosodic variety.

Some misgivings remain. For instance, trivially but unsettlingly, Frost is said to have made Bridges's acquaintance in 1914 (p.17), but not until 1928 (p.28). Second, there is an extraordinary moment at which Frost is reproved for allowing "Design" to remain ambiguous beyond the intention apparent from the circumstances of its composition, a case of the intentional fallacy at its most absurdly reductive.

Third, and most important, the book reads though written by a cheerleader. Enthusiasm is a virtue, but it seems to preclude Potter from acknowledging what a bitchy, difficult man the poet was, and to prevent his exploring the way in which Frost's great popular success in some sense removed him from literature and damaged his later work by inviting him to rest in the applause of an audience who never understood him, the situation about which Lionel Trilling made his celebrated speech on Frost's darkness. However, this book should persuade its intended readers to move beyond it and, so doing, achieve a valuable purpose.

The potency of cheap music, as it was said elsewhere, in another story. In several of Simpson's poems the titles of popular songs crop up as if to prove that they are implicated in how we live and feel. And they are; or in Simpson's poems they are.

A possible problem with story-telling in free verse is that it makes for a quiet poetry, one in which language is disturbingly close to prose in both rhythm and the distribution of images and figures of speech. Simpson seems to have forbidden himself cadences which would not be permitted to a narrator in a prose short story. Personally, I don't think it matters: interesting stories solicit my gratitude, and the questions one is at first tempted to ask — "Is this verse? Is this poetry, or is it prose?" — are about as important as "Is this a true story?"

In his overtly American stories, Simpson is predisposed towards a sad, gentle satire. He evokes unhappy couples trapped in materialism and the conventions of society. "The Beaded Pear" ("The Ice Cube Maker" (both reminiscent of John Cheever's stories) and "The River Running By" express that banal loneliness which is frequently the subject of short stories. Names of products, titles of movies and TV shows, tunes, lights, sounds and smells, those bits of everything which Simpson in that earlier manifesto poem said American poetry ought to annex: all are drawn in to evoke people in their time and place. It makes his poems tangible and effective, though there is a touch of strange stand-offishness in describing lives palpably not one's own so largely in terms of surrounding paraphernalia. It is not exactly a technique of caricature, or of outline; but something does seem left out.

Even so, Simpson is a gently accepting observer and participant. If he shakes his head with sadness at what his characters get up to, the result is bemusement, the staring of wisdom and not finger-wagging: no one ever learned anything without first being confused. As for the effect on memory of people, places, things, overheard events and people hardly known, that vagueness, and interest, outside the circle of one's own intimacy — Simpson has the last and memorable word:

These things make an unforgettable impression,  
as though there were a reason for  
being here,  
in one place rather than another.

These things make an unforgettable impression,  
as though there were a reason for  
being here,  
in one place rather than another.

These things make an unforgettable impression,  
as though there were a reason for  
being here,  
in one place rather than another.

These things make an unforgettable impression,  
as though there were a reason for  
being here,  
in one place rather than another.

These things make an unforgettable impression,  
as though there were a reason for  
being here,  
in one place rather than another.

These things make an unforgettable impression,  
as though there were a reason for  
being here,  
in one place rather than another.

## Scoring ducks

By J. S. Bratton

**JOHN ELSOM (Editor):**  
*Post-War British Theatre Criticism*  
270pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
£9.75.  
0 7100 0535 0

Tyran 20, Hobson 15, Shulman 2, Trevin 6. . . It is difficult to avoid setting up a mental scoreboard for the critics quoted in John Elsom's *Post-War British Theatre Criticism*, recording 1 for an interesting observation, 2 for a penetrating insight and 5 for a bullseye, that moment (which the anthology seems to allow to each reviewer in turn) when everyone else missed the point, and one alone guessed what we would all be thinking today. In some rounds the handicapping is obvious and the score a foregone conclusion, but there are surprises: the *Daily Express* welcomed *Look Back in Anger*; J. C. Trewin noted Pinter's mastery of dialogue at first hearing, in the almost universally condemned 1956 *Birthday Party*. But as enjoyable as the high scores are the ducks, when Ivor Brown despises *The Cocktail Party* or Milton Shulman completely misrepresents *Godot*. Of course hardly anybody did well with a snap reaction to Beckett, except Kenneth Tynan, who emerges as a clear winner overall.

The match is, of course, rigged: John Elsom has not only selected reviews of comparatively few plays, but also edited them fairly thoroughly, prising sometimes only snippets or a single sentence; he has ensured that Tynan, started favourite by quoting his earliest work from the 1950 edited selection, *He That Plays the Kite*. But in reading these supercharged fragments of prose, each one a virtuoso performance in which the critic has struggled to cram his sensibility and perspicacity into a few pungent sentences, one cannot but respond with excitement. The sense of an elegant and dangerous game is reinforced by the subject-matter — the strain of the last night which is repeatedly invoked, and the unfolding history of a great theatrical change, which is surely a topic worth the enthusiasm Elsom wishes to generate.

Doubts about the anthology relate to its purposes. The intention to "evolve the great occasions in post-war British theatre" for the entertainment of "the general theatre-goer" avowed on the dust-jacket is successfully, if selective-

ly, carried out. As a "source-book for contemporary reactions" for the use of "the theatre student", though, it has drawbacks. It deserves sympathetic reading as an attempt to find a form for theatre history which is neither a list of dates nor completely anecdotal and subjective. But Elsom tends to fall between two stools. Devoting most of the space to the critical responses themselves necessitates that the skeletal history which introduces them can only deal in any detail with the specific plays reviewed, and there is no room to argue the case for the picture of theatrical development which is given. One would like to know why, for example, productions of Brecht in Britain are scarcely even mentioned, when the Berliner Ensemble visit in 1958 was not only one of the significant events in the post-war transformation of the British theatre, but provided as instructive a set of critical reactions as any which is included, bearing very directly upon the question of the role and the power of critics in forming theatrical taste.

The intention to "allow the reader to be critic of the critics" is the other objective of the volume which is not properly served by the method adopted. It is impossible for the reader to assess the critics justly, either in relation to their effect upon the reception of the plays or in terms of their own development, when the principles and methods of selection from their work are not revealed to us by any extended or coherent critical discussion. We are not told enough. Why did the gallery boo *Guns and Dolls*? What did Continental critics say about *Godot*, the Americans about *A Streetcar Named Desire*? Did their productions differ very greatly? And in every case, how representative is the selection of reviews given?

Questions about the function and effect of criticism in the theatre, distinctions between various journals and their demands upon, and attitudes towards, their critics, and other such matters are touched upon in the introduction, but it is not possible to pursue them far by means of the extracts given. Perhaps such detailed study is not the envisaged use of the book, and the glimpses of the possibilities of work in the area are the limit of its intended appeal to students. Such a modest aim, which is by no means to be despised in a field where fascinating material can be rendered numbingly dull, is fairly achieved by Elsom's enthusiastic commitment. The "Topical" sketches which he includes as illustrations, and the ragged but charming chorus of critical voices



Part Black, part Cherokee Indian, part Mexican, a gentle man in private but a musician, wild and sexual in performance, who plucked savagely at his guitar with his teeth as well as his fingers, Jimi Hendrix offended the Daughters of the American Revolution who banned him from a concert tour. This watercolour (1973) by Patrick Proctor, painted three years after Hendrix's death, is included in the series of "Modern British and Irish Paintings, Drawing and Sculpture" to be held on June 12 at Christie's, 8 King St. London SW1.

## In the Poem

To bring the picture the wall the wind  
The flower the glass the shoe on wood  
And the cold chains cleanness of water  
To the clean severe world of the poem

To save from death decay and ruin  
The sacred moment of vision and surprise  
The And keep in the real world  
The real gesture of a hand touching the table.

Sophia de Mello Breyner

Translated by Ruth Fainlight



# The life-expectancy of art

By David Piper

ROBERT M. ADAMS:  
The Lost Museum  
Glimpses of Vanished Originals  
255pp. New York: Viking, \$25.  
0 670 44107 4

The subtitle of *The Lost Museum*, "Glimpses of Vanished Originals", is a necessary qualification. Robert Adams offers us an anthology of lost works of art, hoping "by putting forward this sampler of what has not survived, or has survived only at second hand, to make evident how much richer and more various the past really was than we can know simply by looking at its authenticated remains". After an introduction that touches on some of the ways in which works of art may disappear, his collection proceeds chronologically, in sections on Ancient Civilizations; the Middle Ages; the Renaissance; the Making and Breaking of Collections; World War II. A section on "Freaks and Failures of Survival" recapitulates and expands on some themes broached earlier, and the conclusion again lingers, with examples, on the vulnerability of the works of man and the inevitability of final nuclear or cosmic doom. Meanwhile, Professor Adams invites us to take some comfort from observing "how much can be regained from the past". Part of his perception may sound a bit rum out of context ("Whole museums and entire libraries have been lost, but they only add to the wealth of the lost museum..."), but we can join the author in a melancholy salute, brooding on the old comment on Rome: "Quanta fuit ipsa ruina docti".

Adams is not concerned with ruins, however, which are more or less survivals, but with things lost and known now only by copies, or by preliminary studies, or ghosts of originals transformed into something quite different. His *Lost Museum* is an extension to that immeasurable edifice suggested by André Malraux of the Imaginary Museum, or Museum without Walls—the shelveable collection of reproductions of works of art, available to any interested student in a library, or his own study. This extension may indeed be more acceptable as an idea than Malraux's, for in Adams's collection the copies that he reproduces are not substitutes for original objects

which still exist, but the only records of what these objects once were, and thus in a sense they are "real things" in themselves.

The substance of the book consists of reproductions, 215 in all, mostly well produced in black and white. It is, in short, basically a scissors-and-paste job, a fact reflected in the layout, which makes the narrative a very bumpy ride, the flow of thought being constantly interrupted not only by the illustrations but by captions of sometimes considerable length that would have been more comfortably digested into the main text. And in the text, cross-references are not given to the illustrations, which, in turn, do not always coincide on the same spread with the mention of them in the text. Always objects reproduced are not always given.

Presumably most people likely to read the book will know that Géricault's masterpiece "The Raft of the Medusa" is to be found in the Louvre, but though Adams reproduces an old photograph of it I could not find any reference to where the painting itself is to be found. The photograph makes his point, though—that faulty technique and materials used can lead eventually to the irreversible destruction of the art-object. The photograph makes visible details that I do not remember being able to discern on a recent visit to the Louvre, in the ever more sombre depths of that vast canvas. It is said that the paint is being consumed by the bitumen which Géricault used—perhaps following the practice of Sir Joshua Reynolds—to endow the darks of his composition with a glowing translucency. On the other hand, the point would have been made more strikingly if a second photograph, of the painting as it is now, had been reproduced alongside the first.

Again, as the love of art becomes ever more widely implanted, there are the sheer numbers of visitors to museums: hundreds of thousands, even (as in the National Gallery or the British Museum) millions every year. Though I do not subscribe to the view sometimes expressed that pictures get worn out by the incessant mauling from unresponsive eyes, it is indisputable that the floors of the Acropolis or of Canterbury Cathedral are being worn out, as was Stonehenge, which the ordinary visitor cannot now approach within reaching—touching—distance. At the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, in the first quarter of this cen-

tury, Sir Sydney Cockerell popularized by his example the idea that a great museum could be as agreeable, as welcoming, as domestic almost, as the living rooms of a great country-house. The basis was, of course, a mixed display, and this included rugs on the floor. Cockerell, who was talented in such matters, coaxed out of benefactors, or bought for a few pounds at a time, a great many fine carpets for walking on, but also of a visual quality that would not let down the great paintings on the walls. But as time passed and they became more valuable, the best of them, upgraded to the status of museum objects, had to be removed from the floors and since there was no room to show them elsewhere, withdrawn, rolled up, and stored out of sight.

Deliberate damage is another ever-increasing concern to the harassed museum curator. The greater the star-billing of a work of art, the more attractive it is to the fanatic. Adams writes, "Like the assassins of presidents, assassins of art wander amongst us, unmarked and unregarded, till the moment when it is too late to mark or regard". Their weapons can be swift beyond possibility of prevention. It took seconds for a knife to shred on the National Gallery's Poussin, less for Rembrandt's great "Jacob's Blessing" at Kassel to be sprayed with acid. Adams reproduces the latter, and also that desolating photograph of the "Rokeby Venus" with the gashes of its suffering fresh and gaping. Glazing the pictures, incidentally, is not a conclusive answer. The suffragette Anne Hunt, confronting Millais's portrait of Carlyle behind his glass in the National Portrait Gallery on July 17 1914, had been closely trailed by the Gallery's Head Attendant, who had noticed her the day before. Yet, though he closed with her almost as soon as the meat cleaver appeared from under her cloak, he was not quick enough to prevent the shattering of the glass, and Carlyle's scars are still visible in certain lights.

Preventive measures may be decisive in keeping a work of art in existence, but perhaps at the cost of consigning it to what is almost a tomb. The protective barriers that the great print-rooms of the world have to erect to prevent the greatest drawings by Old Masters from being handled to death become ever more stringent. It is almost impossible to gain access, for example, to Blake's illuminated books, and indeed—though the friction of touching the original, the relic,

is missing—most people will learn as much from the extraordinary facsimiles produced by the Trianon Press as from the originals. But of course the Trianon facsimiles, too, wear out with handling, and are now both hard to come by, and extremely expensive.

Robert Adams quotes examples of a great many modes of destruction: besides time itself, war, theft, censorship, sabotage, restoration, neglect and indifference. Inevitably, World War Two rates a chapter to itself, its ravages all the more poignant because faint reflections survive of a relatively large number of the objects destroyed, in the form of photographs. Thus here we can glimpse the Gozzoli frescoes shelled by the Americans in the Campo Santo at Pisa, the Mantegna bombed to dust in the Ovetari Chapel; a token sampling of the treasures that went in the fire-storm at Dresden or in the bombing of Berlin (including one of the most melancholy of all losses, the ineffably mysterious "School of Pan" by Signorelli); a fragile drawing of the Three Laughers whose laughter was extinguished at Hiroshima.

And the moral? Perhaps to bear ever more urgently in mind Walter de la Mare's injunction to look your last on all things lovely every hour. Since that hour may not only be your last, but that of the loveliness itself.

In a disarming note at the beginning of the book, Adams offers an apology for his autocratic procedures: "No man is or should be a professional student of lost works of art". His own professional field has been English literature. As an avowed amateur in art history, he tends to the sweeping generalization; thus, Queen Christina, emerging briefly as a stage in the provenance of Correggio's "Leda" is qualified gratuitously as "that broody blue-stocking", while Henry VIII is alleged to have spent "most of his last two or three years fighting in France". Nevertheless, Adams's knowledge is impressive and his choice of examples vivid, picturesque and cogent. If it is also fairly arbitrary, that is no doubt inevitable—the field, to put it mildly, is wide. A museum of all the art works that have ever been lost is almost as difficult a concept as a physical resurrection of all the hosts of the dead: there isn't room for them.

Adams takes architecture into his scope without hesitation—here are the frail echoes of the rich substance of Nonsuch, and of Château Gaillon; of Cluny, Cîteaux, and St Augustine at Canterbury, in their prime; of Old

St Paul's; of the Parthenon pinned to its rock by an Islamic minaret in 1670; of Fonthill and of the United States Hotel in Saratoga. Sometimes, one can believe that the surviving copy more than replaces the original. I would not swap Saenredam's drawing of St Peter's Church in Rome for the original, but the latter is lost. I would not swap Saenredam's drawing of St Peter's Church in Rome for the original, but the latter is lost. I would not swap Saenredam's drawing of St Peter's Church in Rome for the original, but the latter is lost.

Conservation is now a problem which obsesses curators, with dire results. It is obviously good that works of art should be protected from destruction, whether due to natural decay, to neglect or to more violent means. Our techniques of preservation have made great advances since the last war, but it does not follow that the objects preserved are necessarily the more accessible and more clearly to be seen, or shown to best advantage. Modern extensions to some of our major galleries provide depressing evidence of the difficulty of reconciling the conservation bid given to architects and designers with the needs of the visitor. Light levels are one factor—it is impossible, for example, to see Elizabethan miniatures in their original brilliance in the dusk which is all that the scientists will allow if we are to prevent their fading—or rather, perhaps, their fading. Objects of art, like people, are subject to laws of mortality and have a life expectancy; but I have yet to find a conservation officer who will give an answer to the question: by how much do we decrease the life-expectancy of a painting if we raise the light level by five, or a hundred times, or whatever? In occasions one seems to be in a quandary as to let the connoisseurs of a thousand years or so hence take their chance ("He who kisses Joy as it flies/Lives in Eternity's smile") or proportioned galleries, filled to the brim with a dead grey light and no air motivated by audible fans, under a massive, aggressively modern ed of layered technology, instead of a ceiling, may be the only solution to the brief worked out by the scientist, but they produce instant melancholia in the visitor.

One of the noteworthy aspects of these events was that they emphasized an approach to book history associated with a group of French historians and generally referred to in English by its French name, *l'histoire du livre*. The classic text representing this approach is *L'Apparition du Livre*, written by Henri-Jean Martin following the plan of Lucien Febvre and published in 1958 in the great series collectively called "L'Évolution du Humain" (issued in translation as *The Coming of the Book*, 1976, translated by David Gougeon). Febvre's preface makes clear the aim of the work: it is not, he insists, intended to be a history of printing, but rather an examination of the role of the printed book in civilization up to the end of the nineteenth century. Febvre states "we hope to establish how and why the book was something more than a triumph of technical ingenuity... we are hoping to prove that the printed book was one of the most effective means of mastery over the world". That goal, he adds, is the "novelty" of the work. Although the Febvre-Martin book builds on a long tradition of studies in the history of printing and publishing, there is no doubt that it has provided an important stimulus to work that focuses on the "English" subtitle has been given to it. The subtitle has been given to it. The subtitle has been given to it.

The introduction to these two volumes includes a history of Blake's project, a detailed account of the evolution of the design, a new series of copies of the engraved edition, and a comprehensive bibliography. Some of the various proofs seen to have been slightly out of sequence (IE, 113, and more prominent shadowing). A full commentary, elucidating the designs, is in preparation. In the meantime, readers who are lucky enough to have access to the early edition will find ample food for thought in the designs themselves.

# From bibliography to *histoire totale*: the history of books as a field of study

By G. Thomas Tanselle

This is the text of the second Hanes Lecture in the History of the Book, which was delivered by G. Thomas Tanselle at the University of North Carolina on April 15, 1981. The lecture is sponsored by the Hanes Foundation for the Study of the Origin and Development of the Book, established in 1929.

1972 was the Year of the Book (it was UNESCO's International Book Year), both 1979 and 1980 could have been called the Year of the History of the Book. In early 1979 there appeared Elizabeth Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, examining the influence of printing on the history of "early-modern Europe" and, six months later, Robert Darnton's *The Business of Enlightenment*, tracing the publishing history of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. Professor Eisenstein also served, in the early months of the year, as the first resident consultant of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, and Professor Darnton, in December, was a speaker under the Center's auspices. In June 1980 a conference (sponsored by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries) was held in Boston on the topic "Books and Society in History"; the speakers, coming from Great Britain, France, and West Germany as well as the United States, issued a joint statement proclaiming, "The history of the book is fundamental to the historical study of society, and calling on scholars, librarians, and foundations 'to support activities in the field of the history of the book'".

And four months later the American Antiquarian Society held a conference called "Printing and Society in Early America", with twenty-nine speakers from four countries. These are but a few of the more prominent manifestations of the fact that the subject of book history has been much in the air in recent months.

One of the noteworthy aspects of these events was that they emphasized an approach to book history associated with a group of French historians and generally referred to in English by its French name, *l'histoire du livre*. The classic text representing this approach is *L'Apparition du Livre*, written by Henri-Jean Martin following the plan of Lucien Febvre and published in 1958 in the great series collectively called "L'Évolution du Humain" (issued in translation as *The Coming of the Book*, 1976, translated by David Gougeon). Febvre's preface makes clear the aim of the work: it is not, he insists, intended to be a history of printing, but rather an examination of the role of the printed book in civilization up to the end of the nineteenth century. Febvre states "we hope to establish how and why the book was something more than a triumph of technical ingenuity... we are hoping to prove that the printed book was one of the most effective means of mastery over the world". That goal, he adds, is the "novelty" of the work. Although the Febvre-Martin book builds on a long tradition of studies in the history of printing and publishing, there is no doubt that it has provided an important stimulus to work that focuses on the "English" subtitle has been given to it. The subtitle has been given to it. The subtitle has been given to it.

He does proceed to show some awareness of these connections, but in a curiously tentative way. First he urges "generalists" historians to learn from those he calls "specialists in the treasure houses of books" and to "tap the vein of information" in their periodicals; the bibliographical journals. The advice is sound, but it is couched in terms that undercut it, suggesting that physical bibliography is a remote specialty that can be "tapped" by historians, rather than a fully-fledged branch of history itself. He continues along this line by asserting that the bibliographical journals "seem to be written by bibliographers for bibliographers" and that in them "it can be difficult to see issues of substance beneath the esoteric language and the antiquarianism". I would be the last to defend the quality of the prose in bibliographical journals; and it would not be profitable to debate whether bibliography has developed more, or less, jargon than other fields. But to call bibliographical writing "antiquarian", rather than "historical", is to confess a failure.

Although studies of publishing, of course, and of the social significance of books in England and elsewhere certainly exist, the pursuit of book history in the English-speaking world seems to be seen as manifestly a distinctly different emphasis

from that of the French. There is no question that the study of English Renaissance drama furnished the impetus for the twentieth-century developments in the field usually called "analytical bibliography" (that is, the elucidation of the printing history of a book through analysis of the physical evidence of its typography and paper). Nor can it be doubted that many of the principal products of English bibliographical scholarship—such as the work of the Bibliographical Society, including the *Short-Title Catalogue*—are primarily concerned with books as material objects. It is further true that, whereas *l'histoire du livre* grew in the hands of historians who had no special expertise in the study of the physical book, the English tradition has emerged from the work of literary scholars who were primarily interested in establishing texts and who recognized that a close examination of physical evidence is relevant to that task.

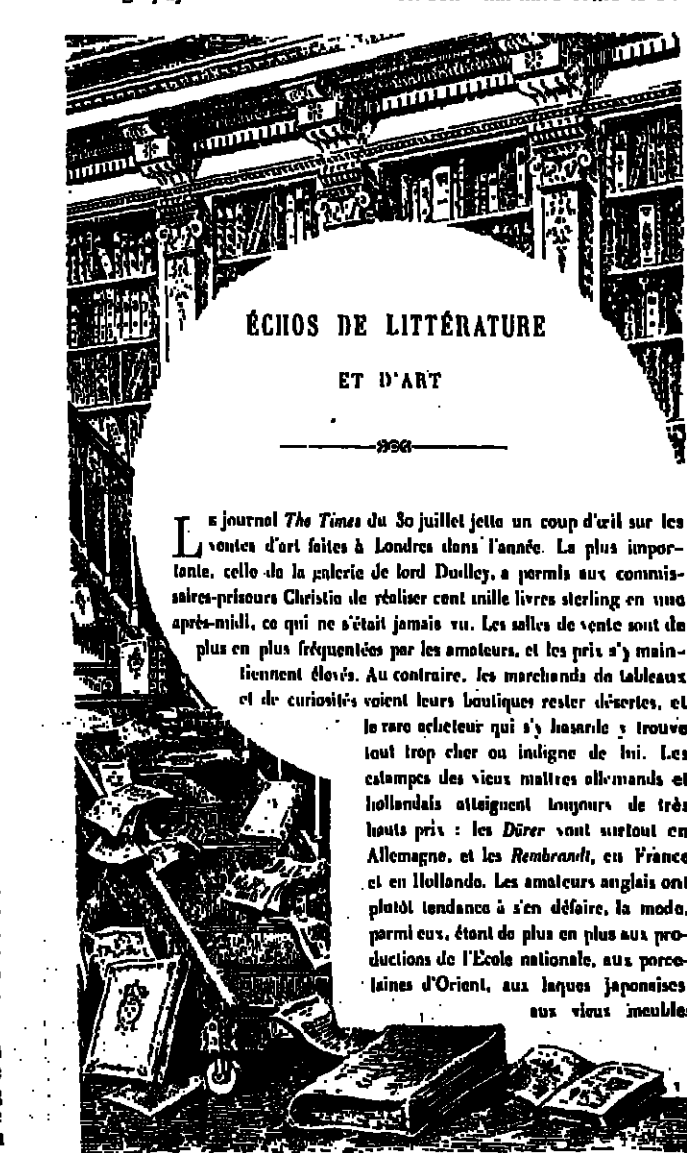
One of the unfortunate results of this split is that many people believe analytical bibliography to be simply a tool of literary and textual study, a technique with no direct bearing on the enterprises of historians. An indication of the size of this gap, and the difficulty of communication across it, is afforded by some of the introductory remarks in Darnton's book. Because I very much admire what Darnton accomplishes in the body of his book and because he demonstrates there an understanding of the connections between these two approaches, I feel free to seize on certain ill-considered remarks that appear in his opening paragraphs. After describing *l'histoire du livre*, he claims that the subject "hardly exists in the United States today". Book history in America, he says, "has been relegated to library schools and rare book collections". Step into any rare book room, he continues, "and you will find aficionados savoring bindings, epilogues contemplating watermarks, erudits preparing editions of Jane Austen; but you will not find across any ordinary, great-and-potatoes historian attempting to understand the book as a force in history."

That so probing and perceptive a historian as Darnton could utter these foolish words is the most telling measure one could imagine of the distance that has grown up between two approaches that ought to be regarded as mutually supportive. The attempted contrast between a rough-and-ready concern with basic historical questions and a rather effete and dilettantish preoccupation with the aesthetics of bookmaking is of course based on hackneyed stereotypes that have no validity. Darnton is a sophisticated scholar, not a meat-and-potatoes historian, and he would not reject as overly precious the study of paper and bindings if he recognized in it a direct bearing on the central concerns of intellectual history.

He does proceed to show some awareness of these connections, but in a curiously tentative way. First he urges "generalists" historians to learn from those he calls "specialists in the treasure houses of books" and to "tap the vein of information" in their periodicals; the bibliographical journals. The advice is sound, but it is couched in terms that undercut it, suggesting that physical bibliography is a remote specialty that can be "tapped" by historians, rather than a fully-fledged branch of history itself. He continues along this line by asserting that the bibliographical journals "seem to be written by bibliographers for bibliographers" and that in them "it can be difficult to see issues of substance beneath the esoteric language and the antiquarianism". I would be the last to defend the quality of the prose in bibliographical journals; and it would not be profitable to debate whether bibliography has developed more, or less, jargon than other fields. But to call bibliographical writing "antiquarian", rather than "historical", is to confess a failure.

Although studies of publishing, of course, and of the social significance of books in England and elsewhere certainly exist, the pursuit of book history in the English-speaking world seems to be seen as manifestly a distinctly different emphasis

ure to see in it any relevance to other historical investigation. (The use of "antiquarianism" as a pejorative term is in fact a practice that historians might be expected to reject, since all historical data, however small they seem, play their role as evidence underlying larger generalizations. In this respect Darnton's view of bibliography offers one example of a broader issue of historical methodology.) Darnton's divided attitude is evident in his concluding remarks about bibliography:



This page from one of two bound volumes of *L'Art et l'Idée*, an illustrated periodical on "le dilettantisme littéraire et la curiosité" (published by Octave Uzanne, Paris 1892), is reproduced in a current catalogue from J. L. Beijers, Utrecht. Auctions of mainly Dutch and Flemish antiquarian books, including two copies of the rare *Deus-Aet Bible* will be held at J. L. Beijers, Achter Sint Pieter 14, Utrecht, on June 23 and 24.

But bibliography need not be confined to problems such as how consistently compositor B missedpell the text of *The Merchant of Venice* or whether the patterns of skeleton formes reveal regularly in compositorial practices. Bibliography leads directly into the hazy-burly of working-class history: it provides one of the few means of analyzing the work habits of skilled artisans before the Industrial Revolution.

Compositor analysis has become a favourite target of the critics of bibliography. But to imply its triviality in one breath and in the next to make the perceptive observation that analytical bibliography provides evidence for social and economic history produces an odd juxtaposition: the details ridiculed in the first sentence are, in fact examples of the kind of evidence praised in the second. Darnton can perhaps be pardoned for failing to see this significance in compositorial spelling habits and the use of skeleton formes because many of those who have uncovered this information have not thought about its use beyond the context of editing and the establishment of texts. Elsewhere, Darnton has gone farther than many of them in realizing that analytical bibliography produces historical—not simply literary—evidence.

The remainder of his study is a

wonderfully detailed investigation of an important episode of publishing history, and these few strictures of his opening pages do not stand in the way of one's admiration for a great book. But they do point to a serious problem that must be faced by scholars of book history. The problem is not so much the existence of numerous specialties and the inevitable difficulty of communication that ensues. The real matter for concern is the nature of the gap that has developed between what have come to be called

reference itself, are further signs that a move toward an international joining of forces is gaining momentum. In attempting to define the new cooperation, I should like to emphasize that it does not mean simply "fusing" or "blending" two different pursuits or specialties to produce a new synthesis or a new insight. Linking *l'histoire du livre* and English analytical and historical bibliography is not analogous to joining psychology with sociology or economics with geography. It is not a pulling together of separate disciplines; rather, by the very nature of their subject each is inherently a part of the other, and any separation of them is artificial and lessens the validity of their conclusions. The two are logically one. All scholars of the history of books, whether of the French or of the Anglo-American school, are historians. Analytical and descriptive bibliography is history: those who analyze compositorial spelling or sort out the impressions and issues of an author's books or describe the typography and paper of particular impressions are attempting to set the historical record straight. The voluminous literature of analytical bibliography and the many descriptive bibliographies covering particular authors, imprints, and genres all form a part of book history. Furthermore, since books are physical objects, any study of the history of books, even when it focuses on the ideas disseminated through them, cannot ignore the physical aspects of books and the effects they have had on the works being transmitted. Darnton asserts that the French have done the most to bring the history of books "into the broad paths of *histoire totale*". Yet it must be said that book history cannot contribute effectively and reliably to that grand, historical picture if it is not itself whole, and perhaps we should first think of *histoire totale du livre*. The call for international cooperation, therefore, has a particular urgency in this field. It goes beyond the desire to exchange information based on the study of different materials, though that is of course present. The crucial motivation is methodological, a recognition of the inseparability of the approaches that have become associated with different countries. Whether it is fair to characterize those countries' contributions in this way is another question, and not one I wish to pursue at the moment. For as long as people think of these two emphases as distinct scholarly fields, we have cause for concern, because they cannot be thinking very carefully about the fundamental nature of their subject.

I should like, therefore, to comment on the basic coherence of the field of book history, on the way in which its constituent parts are inextricably bound together. We could begin anywhere, since each aspect leads directly to the others, but I think the question of texts is a useful point of entry. Scholarly editing and the establishment of texts form a natural meeting place between the examination of books as physical objects and the historical analysis of the role of books in society. When John Feather, in his *Bibliographical Society* paper, says, "It is very unfortunate that the world of bibliography has been swamped by textual scholarship", he is being, I think, somewhat unfair. Not that he questions the value of the textual work accomplished; his point is that an "obsession with textual criticism" has "led to the neglect of other fields". Some difficulty has indeed been caused by what is often perceived as the identification of physical bibliography with editing, but I would state the problem somewhat differently. Analytical bibliography has developed in the hands of literary scholars—particularly scholars of Elizabethan drama—and their primary interest in analyzing physical evidence has been the role it could play in the determination of the relative authority of variant readings in texts. After all, McKerrow's seminal book, *An Introduction to Bibliography* (1927), like the 1913 work out of which it grew, was written for

# Images of solitude

By Andrew Lincoln

DAVID V. ERDMAN, JOHN E. GRANT, EDWARD J. ROSE, MICHAEL J. TOLLEY (Editors).

William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*. A Complete Edition. Two volumes. Oxford University Press, £150. 0 19 817312

About a quarter of Blake's surviving pictorial work resulted from a single commission to illustrate Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*. Blake produced no fewer than 537 watercolour designs for a de luxe edition of the poem, and at least forty-three designs were engraved before the project was abandoned. Ironically, the enormous size of the project has prevented it from becoming, as well known as Blake's smaller series of illustrations. The engravings are already generally available in book form, and the watercolour designs on film, but now for the first time both parts of the project have been reproduced together, in a reasonably compact edition. The two volumes include monochrome plates of all the watercolour designs, and of the en-

gravings, with variant proofs. Some title pages from coloured versions of the engraved edition, and seventy-eight of the watercolour designs, are also printed in colour. The edition allows the entire series to be studied with relative ease, but one wonders how many individuals, or libraries, will be ready and able to meet its formidable price.

The major theme of Young's poem is death, judgment, redemption—was congenial to Blake, but the nine books (or "Nights") offered up sublime myth to visualize by temperate, and Blake's illustrations to Young lack the sustained critical focus of his illustrations to Milton or Dante. *Night Thoughts* has little narrative, and although Young illustrates his themes with a profusion of visual images, only on occasion are single images developed into important focal points for his thought. This presents a serious challenge to the illustrator's integrity. In a characteristic passage in "Night the Fifth", for example, where Young celebrates Night as the friend of Contemplation (lines 191-207), he describes a scene in which a solitary figure sits in a landscape, looking at a book. The series of images, from the pictures of "fame'd Athenian" labouring in silence beneath the stars to two philosophy from heaven. Next, moving from historical example to general statement, he describes the soul which, sitting in

council, "sees, not feels/Tumultuous Life; and reasons with the Storm". Finally he returns inexorably to his own solitude: "In Darkness I'm employ'd/In Delightful Gloom! the clust'ring Thoughts around/Spontaneous rise, and blossom in the Shade". The illustrator must choose one of these subjects, but which is the most promising? The Athenian philosopher seems the easiest to visualize, the soul sitting in council suggests the central theme, while both images are clearly intended to sanction the final account of the poet's solitude. Blake chose the final metaphor, with its blossoming thoughts. His design (172) shows a wise man leaning over an island of cloud in a starry sky. The design is at a meagre sprig of grapes on the vine above him, ignoring the full bunch he holds in his hand. The design seems to irradiate, with some irony, the passage as a whole: the handful of unenjoyed grapes leads us to think twice about the soul which "sees, not feels", and so about the Athenian whose philosophy is the product of such limited perception. No doubt an account of Blake's attitude to Young here could be elaborated by referring to the views Blake expressed elsewhere about "cold floods of abstraction and... forests of coldness", but explicit statements about Blake, beside the great design of the design itself.

Blake's ability to illuminate a complex of ideas with a single concentrated image made him particularly well qualified to illustrate a discursive poet like Young, but he often had to produce illustrations for passages which offered very little to work on, and the quality of the designs varies considerably. Some seem quite perfunctory, while some provide uncomfortable proof that the sublime and the ridiculous are close neighbours. However, there are some magnificent compositions, and a wealth of daring ideas. When Blake's imagination takes fire, as it does rather more often in the later Nights, the designs have an extraordinary beauty. In design 463, for example, which shows the "Manuscript of Heaven", like a Parchment-Scroll, shrunk up by "Flames", the uninhibited sweep of Blake's scroll, which writhes amid blazing "flames" and tumbling bodies, presents a dazzling contrast to the meagre decorum of Young's verse.

Much of the effect of Blake's designs depends on the colouring. The bold outlines are often softened by delicately blended washes, or given depth by subtle shading. Some designs which have a haunting power in watercolour become flat and rather awkward when engraved, as the tumbling bodies were translated into traces of coarse cross-hatching. Some paintings—for example 195, which shows a harp kneeling



"literary students" and set forth the view—still not individually understood—that textual variants or anomalies in printed books can often be explained by a knowledge of the procedures employed in the production of those books. The example set by most analytical bibliographers thus far, and even direct statements made by several of them, has fostered the notion that analytical bibliography is primarily, or solely, a tool of editing and of literary study. The truth is, of course, that any facts uncovered by bibliographical analysis are historical facts, facts of interest in their own right as the data out of which the broader history of printing and publishing is built. Analytical bibliography is unquestionably a valuable tool for editors to use, but its value exists apart from any assistance it offers to editors: it is well worth applying to any book, whether or not one expects to edit the text contained in the book. But its nearly exclusive association with the editing of literary works by scholars in English departments has meant that historians, scholars of other modern literatures, and members of other departments—such as philosophy or the history of science—have not had adequate opportunities for becoming sufficiently acquainted with it to recognize that it is of equal relevance for their fields.

All books, regardless of their intellectual content, are specimens of printing, deserving of bibliographical analysis for what it may disclose about the printing and publishing practices of the time. The books most revealing in this respect cannot unfortunately be expected always to coincide with those containing the texts most worth reading; but what is learned from such books of course forms part of the background one brings to the examination of the more celebrated books. Similarly, the texts of all books are liable to alteration—both inadvertent and intended—in the processes of production, and therefore what any text means may vary according to the edition in which one encounters it. The fact that scholars of ancient and modern literatures have historically given more attention than scholars in other fields to editorial problems and the establishment of texts has deluded some people into believing that the nature of "literary" communication somehow demands closer examination of textual nuances—and therefore texts more reliable—in every detail—than other kinds of writing require. It is hard to see how historians or philosophers could claim that their purposes are served by any less meticulous recording of textual variants and editorial alterations than that employed in the fullest editions of literary works. But some of them have in fact taken this view in the past—and not simply those who are careless readers. There is a fairly widespread feeling that historians, philosophers, sociologists—all scholars, in fact, except those whose texts are "literary"—read for content and need not be concerned with niceties of punctuation or other formal features, whereas literary scholars have to take form and manner of expression as well as content into account, and thus require that closer attention be paid to every detail of text. The naïveté of this position is astounding and shows so little understanding of the nature of reading and of written communication that one is constantly amazed at the number of seemingly sophisticated people who believe it, in one form or another. It involves several undeniable notions: that form and content are separable, that one can define where "literature" leaves off and other writing begins, that subtleties of expression and nuances of meaning are limited to belle lettres; the reasonable way to look at the matter, obviously, is that any serious reader of any text, whatever it is, needs to have available any textual evidence that may have a bearing on understanding the meaning of the text. The issue is not whether minor verbal details and punctuation are significant in certain kinds of writing; the crucial point is that since there is always a possibility of their significance, a reader cannot be satisfied with any text that conceals or obscures such evidence.

Clearly, the scholarly establishment of texts is an activity equally relevant to all fields. And since the physical process of textual transmission affects the meanings of texts, bibliographical

analysis—to uncover the printing history of individual books—is equally relevant to establishing texts in all fields. Recognition of these points has only recently begun to spread in any significant way beyond the field of literature, and they have not yet been sufficiently addressed in any field. Furthermore, this connection between physical detail and intellectual content, between analytical bibliography and textual meaning, has a logical bearing on the study of the role of books in society. For this study must be interested both in book production (the place of the book industry, and its details of operation, in a given society and economy) and in books as disseminators of ideas (the place of book distribution in intellectual history); and because the two are so intertwined, historians of the book must recognize that any pursuit of one will inevitably involve study of the other.

For example, one of the prominent activities associated with *l'histoire du livre* (though by no means associated only with French history) has been the analysis of private library holdings, of booksellers' catalogues or inventories, and of borrowing records from institutional libraries. The object of such study is of course to help establish reading habits, as one clue to understanding the dominant ideas that shaped the thinking of a given time and place. This undertaking is tricky, and some of its pitfalls are well known: the presence of books in private libraries does not mean that they were read; the retention of titles in dealers' or publishers' catalogues over a period of time could be either a sign of popularity or an indication that those works were not selling and that the original stock was still on hand; the extent to which the publishing-bookselling market was responsive to readers' interests has to be assessed before one can talk about individuals' purchases or borrowings as a reflection of "reading tastes"; the influence of some books may have depended more on oral discussion than on the actual purchase or borrowing of the books for reading. A similar difficulty, but one that has been much less recognized, is that one cannot satisfactorily discuss the influence of a work in a particular area and period without knowing the peculiarities of the texts in which that work was being read. When a catalogue simply names an author and title, one must try to establish precisely what edition is being referred to, for it can make a great deal of difference whether people were reading one translation rather than another of a foreign work, for instance, or an abridgement or a children's adaptation rather than the full text. Less extreme variations can also be equally important: in any two editions that supposedly contain the same text, there will probably be differences, and whatever their origin, they may have an effect on how the work is understood and interpreted by readers. Historians are not in a position to criticize a historical figure for misinterpreting a particular work without

checking first to see whether the text that figure used may not in fact support the interpretation. Sometimes there is direct evidence to identify the text, as when a passage is quoted in the course of an essay, a letter, or a diary entry, and the passage can be matched with the text of a particular edition; in other cases there is much less to go on, but the point is that the attempt to identify precise texts, rather than simply the titles of works, and then to ascertain any peculiarities in those texts, must be recognized by historians as a basic responsibility when they are taking up questions of the influence of certain books at certain times.

That people have generally in the past read and quoted from whatever edition of a work came most conveniently to hand does not, unfortunately, distinguish them from general readers, and even scholars, today. Many scholars have not paused to recognize what analytical bibliography has been demonstrating for three-quarters of a century about the connection between the physical means of textual transmission and the text itself—and thus the meaning—that gets transmitted; and as a result they have often been content to quote from paperback or anthology reprints without determining whether those texts correspond with the original printing (indeed, without the idea that differences might exist ever entering their minds). The problem is the same one, transferred to the present, that historians have to face in dealing with the use of books in the past. If book history is to be concerned—as it rightly should be—with the role of books in spreading ideas, then textual matters are central to it; and the analysis of the physical evidence found in books is, in turn, central to the elucidation of textual questions. Textual study, in other words, provides a direct and inevitable link between analytical bibliography and *l'histoire du livre*.

Book history is also social and economic history, dealing with the operation of the printing and publishing industries, and here, too, there is a direct connection, not always understood, with the analysis of physical evidence. Most histories of printing and publishing firms—and therefore the broader histories based on them—have been constructed from the firms' archives, from business records and correspondence files of the firms themselves and of the persons with whom they dealt. Such manuscript material, when it exists, is unquestionably a rich source. But what use is made of the actual books and other pieces of printed matter produced by these firms? Often they are sought out only to verify their existence for purposes of constructing a comprehensive list of imprints or to be perused as the basis for generalizing about their design and content. Rarely is the physical evidence in them analyzed for any further details it might provide concerning the operation of the firms in question.

Analysis of the recurrence of identifiable pieces of type, of peculiarities in spelling and punctuation, of press figures, and so on can sometimes reveal information about the number of compositors and presses employed, and their manner of sharing the work, the size of the type supply, and the like (all of which reflect economic considerations). Charlton Hinman's detailed analysis of the physical evidence in the Shakespeare first folio—the most elaborate work of analytical bibliography yet performed—is essentially a contribution to the history of Jaggard's printing shop, although the motivation behind it was to uncover evidence relevant to making editorial decisions about the text of Shakespeare's plays. Scarcely any work of this kind has been undertaken except in connection with editorial problems; but our knowledge of the history of printing and publishing practices will suffer until such analysis has been applied to large numbers of books, including those of little interest for their texts. Some doubt has arisen in recent years, stimulated by D. F. McKenzie's searching criticisms, about the validity of the results achieved by analytical bibliography. But the proper interpretation of historical evidence—of any kind—is always a matter of judgment; and while there is little question that some analytical bibliographers have been unwise in their evaluation of evidence, much solid work has also been produced.

In any event, however one judges the success of analytical bibliography in the past, analytical work must continue: the books are there, holding clues to their own history, and we must try to learn all we can from the physical evidence they preserve. They are, after all, the primary evidence for book history, although this obvious fact is often overlooked. When historians write about printing and publishing firms, they are likely to think of the archives of the firms and any other relevant manuscript materials as the primary evidence; and so they are in some respects. But the printed items themselves also provide information about the bookmaking process, and whenever that information conflicts with the archival record, it must take precedence: the actual books constitute the evidence, whereas printers' and publishers' records contain statements about the books. To be sure, both kinds of materials must be used when they are available, because each is likely to furnish some information not in the other; but students of books history, by the very nature of their field, have to recognize that books as physical objects are central to their concern. Their ultimate interest may be in the spread of ideas; but to understand the role of books in that process requires paying attention to the books as artifacts.

For this reason the collecting of books (as opposed to the collecting of texts) is essential to scholarship in this field, just as the collecting of all other kinds of artifacts is crucial if we are to

attempt to understand what happened in the past. Photographs or reproductions of artifacts may have their uses, but they are no substitutes for the objects themselves, and in the same way photographic copies of books or modern reprints of texts cannot replace the originals. No one has as trouble seeing this point when the subject is the artistry of bookmaking: to evaluate the quality of presswork, paper, and binding naturally requires looking at them directly, just as one must look at an old painting and not a reproduction of it. And of course the history of the book arts is a significant subject in its own right.

But another branch of book history—including the approaches now encompassed by the term *l'histoire du livre*—is concerned with books as conveyors of ideas, not with the artistry of books; and it is in this connection that many people have failed to understand how the physical books remain primary. There has been a strange reluctance to recognize that what written or printed words say is affected by the physical means through which they are transmitted. Once one does understand this point, one perceives not only that every edition of a work may differ but that every copy of every edition is a separate piece of historical evidence. No two copies are ever quite identical; sometimes the differences do not appear to have any significance, but at other times they are important, and in order to discover which situation exists in any instance one must examine copies that seem at first to be duplicates. Falconer Madan's famous phrase "the duplicity of duplicates" has been a part of bibliographical idiom for seven decades but the enormous significance of the fact it alludes to, though increasingly perceived by collectors and special collections librarians, is not yet a part of the thinking of the majority of the people who study books. It is not reasonable to expect that many assemblages of apparent duplicates—like the great collection of Shakespeare first folios at the Folger Library, or of printings of Hemans' *Madeline's* works at The Newberry Library—will be formed, but their rationale and scholarly value should be more widely understood. Scholars and other readers must come to see, more than they do now, that what they read in one copy of an edition is not necessarily what is present in other copies of that edition, let alone copies of other editions. Anyone who has prepared a scholarly edition of a text can testify to this point: it is surprisingly few other.

Nevertheless, the connection between the meaning of a text and its physical presentation indicates the importance of the material history—not just to the history of books as artifacts—of collections of original editions. The collector—whether private or institutional—is a preserver of the evidence upon which all book history must rest.

It will be clear that everything I have said—of the principles underlying my list—applies to manuscripts as well as printed books. Indeed, those studying the "history of the book" sometimes use "book" to include manuscripts as well—especially manuscripts from before the mid-fifteenth century when they constituted the primary means for the dissemination of written works. The UNESCO volume, *The Book through Five Thousand Years* (1972), devotes considerably more than half its space to manuscripts, and the statement on book history that emerged from the Boston conference takes "books" to mean "manuscripts and printed works of all varieties." Of course, *l'histoire du livre* concentrates on the role of printed books in society and on the ways in which they differ from manuscripts; but however great those differences may be, it is important to understand the study of the history of printed books and that of manuscripts are similar pursuits. Manuscripts, being unique, are essentially different from printed books: to their manner of physical production, but as we are gradually learning, copies of what is supposed to be the same book are often not identical either, and in any event the process of copying has a profound effect on texts, whether the process is scribal copying or the work by printers. It follows that the study of the influence of pieces of writing has to be grounded in a knowledge of the physical media by means

of which they are preserved and transmitted, regardless of whether those media depend on handwriting or printing type.

Indeed, all aspects of the production and distribution of reading matter are interconnected, and the progress of book history as a field of learning rests on the recognition of this axiomatic point. The kind of work now labeled *l'histoire du livre* and the kind called "analytical bibliography" may be for the most part logography with different groups of people, but both will be less fruitful than they might be if they develop as independent disciplines. Darnton describes one of the pursuits of *l'histoire du livre* as "macroscopic surveys of book production," and we must be grateful that the recent interest in *l'histoire du livre* has revived attention in the study of the book industry in the large contexts of social, economic, cultural, and intellectual history. At the same time, we recognize two directions in which a true macro-study of the book must proceed. First of all, it must incorporate the analysis of the physical evidence within books and manuscripts, a study that—far from

being a bypath—leads directly to the centre, the meaning of the texts themselves. And second, the broad view of the book in one country, built up from this foundation, must be joined to similar histories based on the experience of other countries. Individual books cross national boundaries and become international commodities; so do works as they are printed (in the original language or in translation) in various countries and are subjected to the characteristic book-trade practices of those countries.

Book history requires both international cooperation and interdisciplinary communication. We cannot say that one kind of book history is appropriate for history departments and another kind for literature departments. Books have unarguably been central to the development of thought in all fields, and textual study—the study of differences between what copies of the same work say—cannot be divorced from the study of the book as a cultural force. Furthermore, we need to learn not to draw a line between our own use of books in the present and the situation faced by people in the

past when they used books; as responsible readers and scholars, we have to be alert to potential textual problems in the books we use, just as we have to understand how the influence of particular books in the past was affected by textual differences among copies. I am not claiming that every study of book history has to be a broad synthesis: scholarship does not grow in that way, and we must of course have specialized studies from which to construct the larger syntheses. I am only suggesting that it is not productive to compartmentalize book history in the way that we have often been accustomed to. As we begin more routinely to understand that the intellectual content of books is related to their physical production, we shall also understand more deeply the essential unity of the field. We have always known that the book industry is special, because its product disseminates ideas, but we shall then see how essential a knowledge of it is to understanding those ideas. We shall see that the history of books in this unified sense is central to the humanistic study; it is central to the efforts we all make as readers to learn from the past.

© G. Thomas Tanselle, 1981

## The scholar as printer

By D. J. McKittrick

HANS SCHMOLLER (Editor and Translator)

Giovanni Mardersteig:  
The Officina Bodoni  
An Account of the Work of a Hand Press 1923-1977  
285pp. Verona, Italy: Edizioni Valdonega. Distributed by Bodley Head, £42.  
88 85033 04 0

When Giovanni Mardersteig died in 1977, both his name and the name of the Officina Bodoni, the press he had founded and operated for forty-four years, were familiar not only to bibliophiles and book collectors, but also to scholars in a wide range of disciplines. The subject of a major exhibition in the British Museum in 1954, this universally admired press was the subject of a yet grander exhibition in the British Library in 1978 and another at the Triennale in Milan in 1979.

Mardersteig was a native of Weimar, home of Count Harry Kessler's Cranach Press but his inspiration can be traced back to the English private press movement of the 1890s. Although he himself published many of the books he printed, as the "Edizioni Officinae Bodoni", and although he designed several types of his own, Mardersteig also printed for other publishers. It is a measure of how different his attitude to his own type-faces was from William Morris's or Cobden-Sanderson's that his Dante type was made available both from the English Monotype Corporation and from Ruggiero Olivieri in Milan, and in 1928 Mardersteig willingly co-operated with Stanley Morison to produce the Pastonchi type-face for the Monotype Corporation.

steig's work on Felice Feliciano and Luca Pacioli. He will be remembered as much for the qualities of scholarship in his books as for the unrivalled beauty of his presswork, paper, and bindings.

Much of Mardersteig's time in his last years was taken up in the planning of the present book, but he died, after lengthy illness, before it could be finished. There are, as a result, inevitable and obvious gaps. He had completed the arduous task of writing commentaries on individual titles that he felt could usefully be enlarged on, and wrote a characteristically lively and extraordinary speed in 1927-36. He also recorded as much as he knew of the French punch-cutter Charles Malin, whose private life remained even to scholars in a wide range of disciplines. The subject of a major exhibition in the British Museum in 1954, this universally admired press was the subject of a yet grander exhibition in the British Library in 1978 and another at the Triennale in Milan in 1979.

Mardersteig was a native of Weimar, home of Count Harry Kessler's Cranach Press but his inspiration can be traced back to the English private press movement of the 1890s. Although he himself published many of the books he printed, as the "Edizioni Officinae Bodoni", and although he designed several types of his own, Mardersteig also printed for other publishers. It is a measure of how different his attitude to his own type-faces was from William Morris's or Cobden-Sanderson's that his Dante type was made available both from the English Monotype Corporation and from Ruggiero Olivieri in Milan, and in 1928 Mardersteig willingly co-operated with Stanley Morison to produce the Pastonchi type-face for the Monotype Corporation.

The books too that he chose to print had little in common with those printed by other private presses. One of the earliest to appreciate his talents was Hermann Hesse, and Mardersteig remained alert to the works of contemporary artists of all kinds throughout his life, whether in the wood-cuts of Egon Schiele, Bruno Braumantl, or Reynolds Stone, or the marvellous etchings of Pietro Arinonori for Gropius's *The Overcoat* published in 1975. His editions of *Asop's Fables* (1972) and of Terence's *Ancient* (1971) are the latest appearing for the first time with Mardersteig's illustrations, were rightly acclaimed as much for their contribution to art history as for their presswork. Mardersteig's own scholarly interest in early printing was reflected in the late 1920s, as well as in the care he gave to an edition of Bembo's *De Aere* in 1969, and finally, in the letters he prepared for *The Seven Ages of Greece* (1976), which was the last book he ever published. Morison, too, was one of those best able to recognize the importance of Marder-

John Holroyd Reece had a hand. Secondly, as well as all the books, so carefully described, a great deal of the ephemera of the press might usefully have been included.

The point at which to stop describing such minor products is not an easy one to fix, and must depend largely on the purpose of the volume being prepared. But by declining to describe even some of the ephemera this book ignores two major and legitimate expectations: no authoritative account of them has ever appeared apart from that published a little while ago by John Ryder in *The Private Library*, even though it is a field to which serious collectors have increasingly been turning. More generally, by omitting such matters this survey leaves out a little considered aspect of the history of any press which nevertheless is the source of its liveliest, an enigma: his memoir is one of the most detailed accounts we have of this genius, to whom Mardersteig's own type designs, quite apart from such other masterpieces as Eric Gill's *Perpetua*, owe so much. Of those Mardersteig types—Dante, Griffio, Zeno—there is scarcely a word here.

He had planned to write what might have been his most absorbing chapters on them, but died before he could do so. The work he published elsewhere on the subject is an indication of what might have come from that most observant of eyes and authoritative of pens.

The title-page, quite properly, gives pride of place to Mardersteig, but Hans Schmoller has been more than simply the editor and translator of this volume. His very considerable introduction gives a fuller account of Mardersteig's life and the fortunes of the press than any previous one. Many lists of its productions have appeared before, beginning with Mardersteig's own *catalogue raisonné* (in three languages) in 1929, while exhibition catalogues have been more or less complete according to circumstances. But Schmoller's bibliography, freshly compiled for this new survey, is as definitive as such things ever can be. Every book is fully described, both Mardersteig's own publications and also those printed on commission for private individuals or publishing firms. In the many cases where Mardersteig printed editions in several languages (usually Italian, German, and English) each translation is given full and separate treatment.

The *Officina Bodoni* invites comparison with the great bibliographies of the Doves and Ashendene presses, though it differs from them in being printed by machine rather than by hand. Its contents provoke only two serious criticisms. Firstly, no less than seven separate indexes (quite apart from a supplementary list at the end of that entitled "Additional names from the commentaries") make it far from easy to consult. Mardersteig's name appears separately in three of them, *Officinae Bodoni*, *Officinae Bodoni*, and *Officinae Bodoni* in two, while some prior knowledge is required to trace all the books in which

## ANTIQUARIAN BOOKS

Ursus Books Ltd.  
667 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10028  
T. Peter Kraus, President

Among the rare and beautiful books on display at Stand 48 will be fine colour plate books, including:  
Trew & Ehret. *Plantae Selectae*. Augsburg, 1750-1773. A fine copy in contemporary binding.  
Dresser. *Monograph on the Family of Rollers*. 1893. In the original cloth.

Also featured will be several outstanding English literary items, such as:  
Kipling's first book, *Schoolboy Lyrics*, Lahore, 1881. With a drawing on the front cover.  
Probably the only presentation copy of Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade".  
Presentation copy of Housman's "A Shropshire Lad."

## E. JOSEPH (DAVID BRASS).

48a Charing Cross Road,  
London, WC2H 0BB.  
Telephone: 01-836 4111 & 9366  
Standard Sets in Binding or Original Cloth;  
Colour Plates & Natural History; Modern Illustrated  
Books; Travel; Fine & Rare Books.  
STAND 16

## WARRACK AND PERKINS

Rectory Farm House  
Church Enstone, Oxfordshire. OX7 4NN  
STAND NO. 41  
19th- & 20th-Century Illustrated Books,  
Prints and Drawings



MICHAEL PHELPS  
ANTIQUARIAN BOOKS  
specializing in The History of  
MEDICINE SCIENCE  
& TECHNOLOGY  
You are cordially invited to visit us at STAND 84 where a selection of general and specialist items will be shown  
203 UPPER RICHMOND ROAD WEST, LONDON SW14 8QT  
01-878 4699

## ANTIQUARIAAT JUNK b.v.

Van Eeghenstraat 129  
1071 GA Amsterdam, Holland  
Tel. 20-763185  
Natural History Booksellers Since 1899  
Large stock of fine antiquarian natural history books such as illustrated hand coloured books on birds, butterflies, flowers, herbs and classics on geology and paleontology.

## McNAUGHTAN'S BOOKSHOP (STAND 24)

TRAVEL, LITERATURE, FINE ARTS  
ILLUSTRATED AND EARLY CHILDREN'S BOOKS

## LOOK AT THE ANTIQUARIAN BOOKS COLUMNS IN THE TLS FOR THE LATEST ADDITIONS.

STAND 22  
JUBILEE BOOKS LTD  
18 High Street  
Burford, Oxon  
History, Literature, Theology

Chelsea Rare Books  
STAND NO. 21  
also  
163 High Street  
Aldeburgh  
12th-28th June  
313 King's Road  
London SW3



# Incunabula from Baden-Württemberg

By Lotte Hellings

P. AMELUNG:

Der Frühdruck im deutschen Südwesten 1473-1500: Ausstellung der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek. Band 1. Ulm. 407pp. Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart/DM.89. 3 7772 7929 3

The spread of printing in Europe is reflected with remarkable accuracy in the wave of exhibitions passing through its major libraries exactly five hundred years after the invention of the process. South-West Germany should by rights have taken its turn in 1973. Fortunately however, not everyone is obsessed by the magic of a quinquenary. Dr P. Amelung was allowed as much time as he needed to prepare a travelling exhibition and a catalogue based on his expert knowledge of printing in South-West Germany in the fifteenth century. The result is a superbly illustrated handbook in two volumes, which puts the history of printing in this area on a new and firmer basis.

The book is restricted, for understandable administrative reasons, to printing in the modern Bundesland Baden-Württemberg. The author apologises for this obvious anachronism, which excludes Augsburg, a city with many historical connections with the region, as well as two important, nearby, centres of printing—Strasbourg and Basel. In fact highlighting a limited area, which means concentrating on one or two centres not of the first importance, has proved to be richly rewarding.

A glance at one of the maps which indicate places of printing in the fifteenth century shows that part of the modern demarcation, with the Rhine forming the western and southern border of the state, was by no means without significance then. On the west bank of the Rhine blank areas were around Basel and Strasbourg suggest that for a long time no other printers were tolerated in the vicinity. No such isolation existed in the country east of the Rhine, where the cities of Augsburg and Ulm were the most important printing centres. The map is dotted with small places of every kind, university towns, monasteries, princely residences and episcopal sees, where a printer made a short-lived appearance. This alone suggests that here we have to do with a rather different and less rigid world. In this land of pleasant variety we find that what is now Baden-Württemberg comprised the city of Ulm, the subject of Dr Amelung's first volume here under review, Reutlingen, Heilbronn and Esslingen, which will be dealt with in the second volume, together with nine other, very small, centres.

Ulm, a thriving city on the Danube, was in the fifteenth century the most important town of South-West Germany after Strasbourg. Its first printer, Johann Zainer, had learned the trade in Strasbourg, as had so many other printers in the area. When starting his career he had the enthusiastic backing of Heinrich Steinhilber, the Ulm humanist, Steinhilber was the author of German versions of Petrarch's *Boccaccio* and *Asop*, published by Zainer in editions which have become highly famous for their illustrations. Ulm's main claim to fame as a printing town derives from its rich tradition of book-illustration. Apart from the books just mentioned there are the editions of Ptolemy by Lienhard Hol and Johann Roger, the Terence, the *Ruch der Weisheit* and the editions of Casparin's *Stages of Rhodes*, which all deserve, their reputation, as milestones in early printing.

In spite of these aesthetic triumphs, the history of printing at Ulm is a chronicle of repeated commercial disasters. Dr Amelung's use of archival material, among which the Ulm 'Schuldbuch' (record of debts) is prominent, contributes much to our understanding. Late publishing involves a high financial commitment. Dr Amelung furnishes that the frequent financial difficulties

ties, and indeed bankruptcies, of the Ulm printers must be explained by a chronic lack of capital. They used to order these matters better in Augsburg. Risks however were usually offset by less adventurous publications. This was undoubtedly Johann Zainer's plan when, simultaneously with his courageous policy of publishing some—though relatively few—early humanist titles, he started to print a long succession of theological works in Latin, probably with the advice and support of the local Dominicans. These, often very large, folios were also most engagingly enlivened with woodcut borders and initials which give them, in spite of the universal nature of their contents, a definitely South German character. It is in trying to discover who bought these books—a curiously blind spot in Dr Amelung's otherwise extremely varied documentation—that we may detect another element which helps to explain Ulm's commercial failure in the book-trade.

The provenance of Zainer's theological works is illustrated by the

sample represented in the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library and the British Library, altogether some 140 copies, to which a few can be added from other collections. Where the early ownership is recorded, they prove with astonishing regularity to have been preserved in religious houses in South-West Germany. There is much to suggest that with the exception of the few notable illustrated books that became collectors' items early on, few Ulm books crossed the Rhine before the secularization of the monastic libraries. Trade may have been more eastward-oriented, down the Danube, but there is no evidence that the books penetrated very far in that direction. Of course, many of the notes of ownership were written much later than the dates of printing, but in so far as they are early, they indicate a very limited marketing area, while the later notes point to a similar pattern of continuous preservation in monastic institutions. If this sample is not too biased by the formation of these particular collections and reflects a substantially true picture one cannot but marvel at the nature of the trade connections that served this restricted market. Can the Ulm Dominicans have acted as agents for the printer? Who would have promoted the sales to the Dominicans of Bamberg, the Augustinian Hermit Friars of Munich, the Benedictines at Weissenstein and Tegernsee, the Carthusians of Buxheim, and the Canons Regular of St John the Baptist at Rebdorf in the diocese of Eichstätt. In any case, the distribution of books to customers was far better organized in Strasbourg, Basel and Nuremberg. That the history of printing in Ulm is a chronicle of failure, or at least partial failure, makes it no less instructive. The formula of a limited, selective market manifestly did not work any better in the fifteenth century than it did later.

This conclusion is especially valuable when it rests on so sound a basis as Dr Amelung has built. He has worked in this limited area on much more varied evidence than is usually possible and has taken particular account of archival and

other extraneous material. By this deliberately broad approach he has avoided the pitfalls of classification based on type alone which in the past has done much damage to the study of incunabula. The author's researches correct a great deal of earlier bibliographical work, one result—by no means the least important—being the demonstration that there were two Johann Zainers, father and son. His revised identifications of printers and types affect the history of printing in places outside his chosen area, notably Strasbourg. One senses when working with this book—and it certainly is a book that invites the incunabula to suit annotating many other works—the author's knowledge is greater than could be accommodated in its form. Especially in the catalogue entries proper he sometimes broaches more questions than can be answered even in this generous concept of an exhibition catalogue. Further work by him, which might also include some Strasbourg printers, is clearly to be hoped for.

omitted, even though some bear tooled ornament. Spines are only rarely reproduced, though their treatment is often helpful in recognizing a binding shop's work. The entries are arranged alphabetically according to present locations. The opportunity of grouping together the work of particular regions or supposed artists has thus been neglected. No doubt the author preferred a deliberately neutral arrangement, since one based on attributions, however stimulating, would have raised numerous problems. He has provided nine-teen appendices listing groups of binding associated according to different criteria.

The plates are of uneven quality, some being so dark that details are invisible. One can understand that a binding as Sopron should have had to be illustrated from an indifferent reproduction, but could not the author have insisted on clearer photographs from Stuttgart or Wolfenbüttel or the Metropolitan Museum, New York? It is sad to find both the British Library and the Bodleian among the sources of below-standard prints.

Dr Schmidt-Künsmüller's declared purpose was to bring together all *cuir ciselé* bindings in a corpus to serve as a basis for further research and stimulus to new discoveries. He has been entirely successful in achieving this aim. The exhaustive list of bindings and the admirable bibliography will be indispensable to all future students of the subject. It is only a matter of regret that the publication follows a recent tendency for important bibliographical works to be priced beyond the reach of most bibliographers.

The author's intention was to illustrate the front and back cover of every binding. This has not proved possible. There are no illustrations of eight bindings (in addition to thirteen that are untraced), and many lower covers are

## Restarting the presses

By B. C. Bloomfield

GRAHAM SHAW:  
Printing in Calcutta to 1800  
249pp. The Bibliographical Society, London.  
0 19 721792 3

India is now the third largest producer, with about 12,000 new titles and editions each year, among countries which publish books in English, but the story of the introduction of printing to the sub-continent largely remains to be told. Most previous work on the subject is usually simply descriptive and authors rely heavily on the assertions and statements of their predecessors. The outlines of the story are well known and the introduction of printing by the Portuguese has been documented by Professor Boxer as well as by Portuguese historians but the introduction of European-style printing in the eighteenth century by the British, French, and Danish missions at Tranquebar has hardly been studied. A. K. Frolkhar's *The Printing Press in India* (1958). Dr Dennis Rhodes's *India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Thailand* (1969) and Miss Ditch's *Early Indian Imprints*

(1964) are the only worthwhile books published and none of these can be entirely relied on. (Barnes's *The Indian Press*, 1940, while generally accurate deals only with newspaper and periodical printing).

The recent researches of M. Duverrier in Paris have not yet been published in full so Graham Shaw's *Printing in Calcutta to 1800* is the first book to display the benefits of modern bibliographical scholarship. It could, perhaps, be described as 'Notes towards a history of printing in Calcutta in the eighteenth century', consisting as it does of a description of the conditions and products of the press at that time, short biographies of the various printers and prefaces traced, followed by a comprehensive list (in ESTC style) of all publications known to have been issued between 1777 (when the notorious J. A. Hickey established the first press in Calcutta), and the end of 1799.

*Printing in Calcutta* also contains a map of Calcutta showing the location of printing establishments; all 'generalist' presses showing various printers merged, were taken over or whose businesses were closed in the wake of bankruptcy or death, and a number of facsimile title pages. Mr Shaw has worked through the holdings of the major

libraries in the United Kingdom and those of the National Library in Calcutta, and he has studied in detail the evidence provided by the India Office Records and the advertisement columns of those newspapers and periodicals which have survived. In 1790, for example, he has traced twenty-nine items, twenty of which appear not to have survived, and there is a fairly typical year. There is a grand total of 368 items traced over the period 1777 to 1799 plus a number of untraced proposals for publication. It is clear that most printers achieved modest and profitable periods, and the newspaper publication and the success of one needed the patronage of the East India Company to survive.

*Printing in Calcutta* is a model of its kind and we now need similar studies for the other presidencies of Madras, Bombay, before historians can attempt a serious history of printing in the sub-continent. Undoubtedly many of Mr Shaw's lacunae will now turn up in book dealers' lists with the legend 'Not in Shaw'—such is the penalty of the pioneer, but it is greatly to be hoped that Mr Shaw will persevere with his labours and ultimately provide us with a general history of early printing in undivided India.

## HISTORY

# Unholy Russia

By Kyril FitzLyon

FRANCIS CARR:

Ivan The Terrible  
220pp. David and Charles. £1.50.  
0 7143 7958 5

Sometime in 1939, soon after the beginning of the war, one of our 'quality' dailies published an article suggesting that the Germans, unlike the rest of us, were descended directly from Neanderthal Man, who had been driven by his more evolved successors into the North-Western corner of Europe, there to breed the race which we were now fighting. No need to labour the obvious implications. It was, of course, an article to suit the times.

Francis Carr's *Ivan the Terrible* is a book of the same inspiration: less a biography than a peg to hang a tract on. The Cold War is upon us and it is useful, indeed essential, to show what Russians are really like, have always been like and, apparently, always will be like. What can serve this purpose better than to take a figure such as Ivan the Terrible and treat his life, reign and times as typical of eternal Russia? One need only draw constant parallels between the customs, attitudes and events of the sixteenth century and those of the preceding and following centuries, to reveal the unchanging character of the Russians and their rulers: crude, murderous, immoral, aggressive, unscrupulous, predatory and destructive; cannibals, too, in some parts of the country (ominously enough, only 'some 700 miles north of Moscow') ie, not all that far from present-day Leningrad at least up to the 17th century. Maybe even now—who knows? (Etymology is brought in to prove the point, but all it proves, alas, is that the author is no etymologist. Since, nevertheless, he frequently relies on etymology to make a point, this defect becomes embarrassing.)

Russians may not be ten-foot tall, but, if Mr Carr is right, they must

surely be unique: contrary to other nations, they have never evolved, have no redeeming features whatsoever and have never had any, none, at least, he finds worthy of mention. It is quite surprising, in the circumstances, that the 'predominant three features of Russian life' have been for centuries and 'have remained so to this day' the relatively mild ones of 'disregard of human rights, servility and bribery'.

All this would be bad enough if it concerned Russia alone, but it doesn't. For 'right from the start of Russian history there has always been a triple strand of aggressive foreign policy'—Russian foreign policy, presumably—composed of armed acquisition, ethnic expansion and 'the religious or theological impulse'. (Among examples given are Catherine II's 'war with India' at the end of the 18th century and an Indian 'campaign' initiated by Paul I at the beginning of the 19th, both of them, alas, overlooked by historians). Besides, Russian rulers—ancient and modern—have for long been affected by 'messianic poison' and this has always driven them to impose their rule on as much of the world as they could lay their hands on. Nor do they do it in two gentle paces. In the old days, back in the 10th century, 'the Russians descended like locusts' on their neighbours' lands; they are obviously no better now, though possibly they no longer eat their enemies. In any case, 'every increase in the size of the Russian Empire has been followed by worsening conditions with [?] her new neighbours. The pattern is certainly constant'. Understandably enough, since Russian wars— invariably aggressive—have always pursued two aims only. The principal one has been plunder. The other—equally reprehensible, it seems—has been 'to establish sea ports, especially those with warm waters'. The Russian background being what it is, it is only natural that this appalling nation should have produced what in other countries would be considered a monster, in the shape of Ivan the Terrible, who inherited the throne of Muscovy as a child of three and reigned for half a century from 1533 to 1584. This was the age which

elsewhere produced Henry VIII and Philip II, but they, no doubt, were regrettable exceptions to local traditions. In Russia, they like them that way, and 'Ivan soon learnt that pity, kindness and courtesy were qualities to be despised in a Russian tsar: cruelty, arrogance and terror were more fitting'. He was no exception—merely a paradigm. The more closely his successors followed his example the more fortunate they were in their personal fates; for 'the Russians spare their tyrants; they kill only those that lack barbarity'. Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Catherine II and Stalin, Russia's most tyrannical despots, died in their beds. 'Ivan's barbarity was, it is true, horrific by any, including, I would say, Russian standards, though Carr would presumably disagree. After all, he considers even Catherine the Great to be in the same league. Anyway, he spares the reader no details of the terror and desolation visited by the semi-insane tsar upon his unfortunate country, forcing his subjects to escape, if they were lucky, 'from their unpleasant land'. Those who escaped south to Circassia were not just lucky; they became at all like the natives, they acquired highly desirable characteristics. For there, women 'could walk around with their breasts uncovered' and these were, according to a 17th-century traveller quoted by Carr, 'like two globes, well placed, well shaped and of an incredible firmness [than which] nothing is so white and so clean'. Nothing like this in Russia where, according to another traveller, 'girls rarely remain chaste beyond the age of seven'. The overall effect of Carr's book is that of a horror-comic, a strip cartoon in which Ivan's life is merely an episode, rather more closely dwelt on than the rest of the story because, being the quintessence of all things Russian, it is, on the whole, more lurid. The chief events of his brutal reign, whatever their nature, are treated simply as material for blood-curdling stories or as typical examples of Russian inhumanity throughout history. Carr discerns no real Russian policy, no concept of national interests and in Ivan's reign or at any other time.

## Finn against Finn

By D. G. Kirby

ANTHONY F. UPTON:

The Finnish Revolution 1917-1918  
60pp. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. \$39.50.  
0 8166 0905 5

At the end of January 1918, the newly independent country of Finland was plunged into civil war. A Red government was established in Helsinki, while the members of the non-socialist, voluntary government, swept aside by the insurgents, set up temporary headquarters in the north, the base for White military operations. The conflict lasted some three months, the turning-point coming in April with the capture by the Whites of the key town of Tampere and the landing on the southern coast of a German expeditionary force.

The scars of the civil war took much longer to heal. The standard interpretation of these events provided by Finnish writers up to the 1960s was that the Whites had fought a war of national liberation against Red insurgents, who were backed by Soviet Russia. It is only in the past two decades that the term 'civil war' has become generally accepted in Finland, although many historians still tend to see the upheaval in Russia as the prime cause of conflict in their own country.

A. F. Upton shares this view in part, in so far as he cannot find any deep-rooted sources of discontent in Finnish society which could have caused such a bloody civil war. He is, however, beginning to see the new independent nation. On the other

hand, he regards the civil war as essentially a Finnish affair, and not something masterminded by revolutionary Russia. The crucial decisions were taken by Finns themselves, and although events in Russia did have a direct bearing on what was, after all, a part of the old Russian Empire, the struggle for power which began in Finland in November 1917 was conducted on the assumption that the former Grand Duchy should and would have a separate national independence.

The civil war was fought by Finns, and the issues which moved them to take up arms were domestic. The Whites won not only because of their superior organization, but because their objectives were straightforward. The Reds lacked conviction and inspiration from the outset. There was a genuine mood of uncompromising radicalism among the workers, which compelled the party leadership in January 1918 to attempt a seizure of power, but the leaders were paper revolutionaries. They shrank back from a revolutionary seizure of power in November 1917, thereby forfeiting their best opportunity to establish a workers' republic. By the end of January, their opponents were much better organized. In any event, the idea of a workers' republic or a new Soviet order was quite alien to the Finnish socialists. What they claimed to be fighting for was democracy, which had been threatened by a 'reactionary' bourgeoisie. Their revulsion, such as it was, bore little resemblance to what was happening in Petrograd at the time.

It is now seventeen years since Upton entered the sacred wood of Finnish historiography and challenged

the assumption that Finland was swept like a drifting log into renewed conflict with the Soviet Union in 1941. His *Finland in Crisis 1940-41* aroused considerable controversy in Finland at the time, but many of his arguments have subsequently been acknowledged by Finnish historians. His latest work is also provocative, although many of the myths and beliefs which he exposes to critical scrutiny have in fact already been challenged and in some cases demolished. This, nevertheless, is an authoritative and very readable study of a tragic but important episode in Finnish history, and of a neglected aspect of the European labour movement.

*The Balkan Revolutionary Tradition* by Dimitrij Djordjevic and Stephen Fischer-Galati (271pp. Columbia University Press. \$26. 0 231 05098 4) is an interpretative history of the Balkan peninsula from the sixteenth-century revolt against the Ottoman Turks up to the Balkan revolutions in the early twentieth century. It includes a detailed account of the formation of the modern national states in the nineteenth century. Basing their account on Balkan revolutions, Dimitrij Djordjevic and Stephen Fischer-Galati demonstrate how 400 years of instability and turmoil have shaped the outcome of world history. Although the authors believe that the geographic location of the peninsula as well as the struggle for control of Constantinople, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Near and Middle East, were crucial reasons for continuing instability of the region has been a primary condition of unrest.

## LIBRARIANS

COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE

### LIBRARY ASSISTANT (INFORMATION & REFERENCE TEAM)

A new information Centre is currently being planned for opening in the autumn. It will collect, organize and promote information about the countries and peoples of the Commonwealth (44 countries, a quarter of the world's population).

A LIBRARY ASSISTANT (non-professional) is needed to complete the team for this project, and we are looking for someone who has experience of and a positive and creative attitude towards information work. Starting Salary at age 21 or over £4,704 per annum (currently under review).

Please send application together with full C.V. to:— The Establishment Officer, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 5NQ.

Closing date for applications: 14 days after publication of this notice.

TLS LIBRARIANS 103

### Royal County of BERKSHIRE

### ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Up to £6138

Applications are invited from candidates who have completed their professional examinations. The post is based at Langley Branch Library. Application form and further details from Divisional Librarian, North East Branch, Central Library, High Street, Slough SL1 1EA. (Tel: Slough 35106). Closing date 18th June.

TLS 103

### WELLCOME

### INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Applications are invited for two posts of Library Assistant. The positions are suitable for non-graduates with at least Part One of the Library Association Professional Examination, or for graduates seeking pre-qualification experience. A knowledge of one or more foreign languages would be an advantage. Salary not less than £4,025 (plus £507 London weighting). Pension scheme and career facilities.

Forward applications, with full details of education and experience and two references to The Secretary, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 3BP, by 18th June 1981.

TLS 103

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.

Applications are invited from individuals to join the Institute's staff. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis. The Institute is a charitable organization and its staff are employed on a full-time basis.